

Netanyahu wins reprieve from vote to topple him

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu won a reprieve on Monday from a threatened parliamentary vote to oust him with a procedural ploy that gave him up to two weeks to shore up his shaky government. The United Torah Judaism Party in Netanyahu's own coalition submitted a no-confidence motion in the fractious government in a move that automatically meant the 120-member Knesset could not vote on a bill — pending since July — for early elections. "In the name of the United Torah Judaism Party, I ask that this vote be turned into a no-confidence motion," party leader Meir Porush told the chamber. Parliamentary procedure requires one week to pass before a no-confidence motion is heard.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation

جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية تصدر بالانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية، الرأى.

Four German tourists kidnapped in Yemen

SANAA (AFP) — Four German tourists were kidnapped in southern Yemen by armed tribesmen, police and tribal sources said late Monday. The tourists, three men and a woman, were kidnapped Sunday afternoon near the village of Yefleh, 80 kilometres south of the capital, Sanaa, by members of the Bari Dhabian tribe, the sources said. Police have already been sent to the area, but the kidnappers' demands are not known. Two Belgians were kidnapped in October by a Yemeni tribe, but were later released unharmed. Two men were arrested in connection with the kidnapping. Yemen's tribes often kidnap tourists and other foreign nationals for use as bargaining chips in disputes with the government, normally over regional aid and utilities such as water, electricity and roads. More than 150 foreigners have been abducted over the past five years in Yemen, one of the world's poorest countries.

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Prisoner protests spread Palestinian shot in head by Israeli motorist, declared clinically dead

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Violent protests to obtain the release of Palestinians held in Israeli jails spread throughout the West Bank Monday, leaving dozens of Palestinians injured, including one youth shot and critically wounded in the head by an Israeli motorist.

The rioting spread to virtually every main West Bank town just days ahead of a landmark visit to Israel and the Palestinian territories by U.S. President Bill Clinton and coincided with a call by the Islamic Resistance Movement Hamas for a renewed armed uprising against Israel.

In the most serious incident, a young Palestinian, Nasir Al Arekat, was shot in the head by an Israeli motorist whose car was stoned in the village of Abu Dis outside Jerusalem, Israeli police said.

Doctors at Jerusalem's Al Maqassed hospital said Arekat was clinically dead. A second Palestinian, Kaldoun Al Kaloti, 17, was wounded in the groin by the same Israeli and his condition was described as moderate.

Elsewhere, some 50 Palestinians were wounded by rubber-coated bullets fired by Israeli troops in clashes which broke out

during protests over Israel's refusal to release political prisoners as part of the Wye River peace accord signed in October. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has accused the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) of fomenting the violence to force Israel to release prisoners "with blood on their hands" among the 750 Palestinians his government agreed to free under the Wye deal.

Last week his government froze further Israeli withdrawals from the West Bank required under the Wye accord until Palestinian leaders acknowledge the peace agreement leaves his government free to release the prisoners of its choice and halt the violence.

Monday's events will have done little to placate the Israeli leader. Palestinian police did intervene during the largest of the protests, when 3,000 activists marched through Nablus in the northern West Bank towards an Israeli army position on the city's outskirts.

Some 150 police used batons to break up the march, injuring three protesters, witnesses said.

But in an ominous sign of the divisions the prisoner issue has opened up in

Palestinian ranks, about 30 armed militants from the Fateh move of Palestinian President Yasser Arafat marched through Nablus, firing into the air in protest at the police action.

Many of the prisoners Israel is refusing to release are Fateh militants involved in anti-Israeli attacks before their leaders signed the Oslo peace accords with Israel in 1993.

Their families and fellow militants are angry at Arafat's inability to gain their release.

In other towns, Palestinian police intervened only sporadically against the protesters.

In Bethlehem, at least 20 demonstrators were wounded when Israeli troops opened fire with teargas and rubber-coated metal bullets on several hundred Palestinians who broke through a police checkpoint near an Israeli army position, witnesses said.

Other more sporadic clashes in which 26 Palestinians were injured broke out in Jenin, Hebron, Ramallah, Tulkarem, Abu Dis and Safit, witnesses said.

The Israeli army said in a statement that the four border guards had been lightly injured in the

clashes.

Palestinians have been clashing with Israeli troops nearly daily since Israel last month included 150 common criminals in the release of 250 Palestinian prisoners required under the Wye accord.

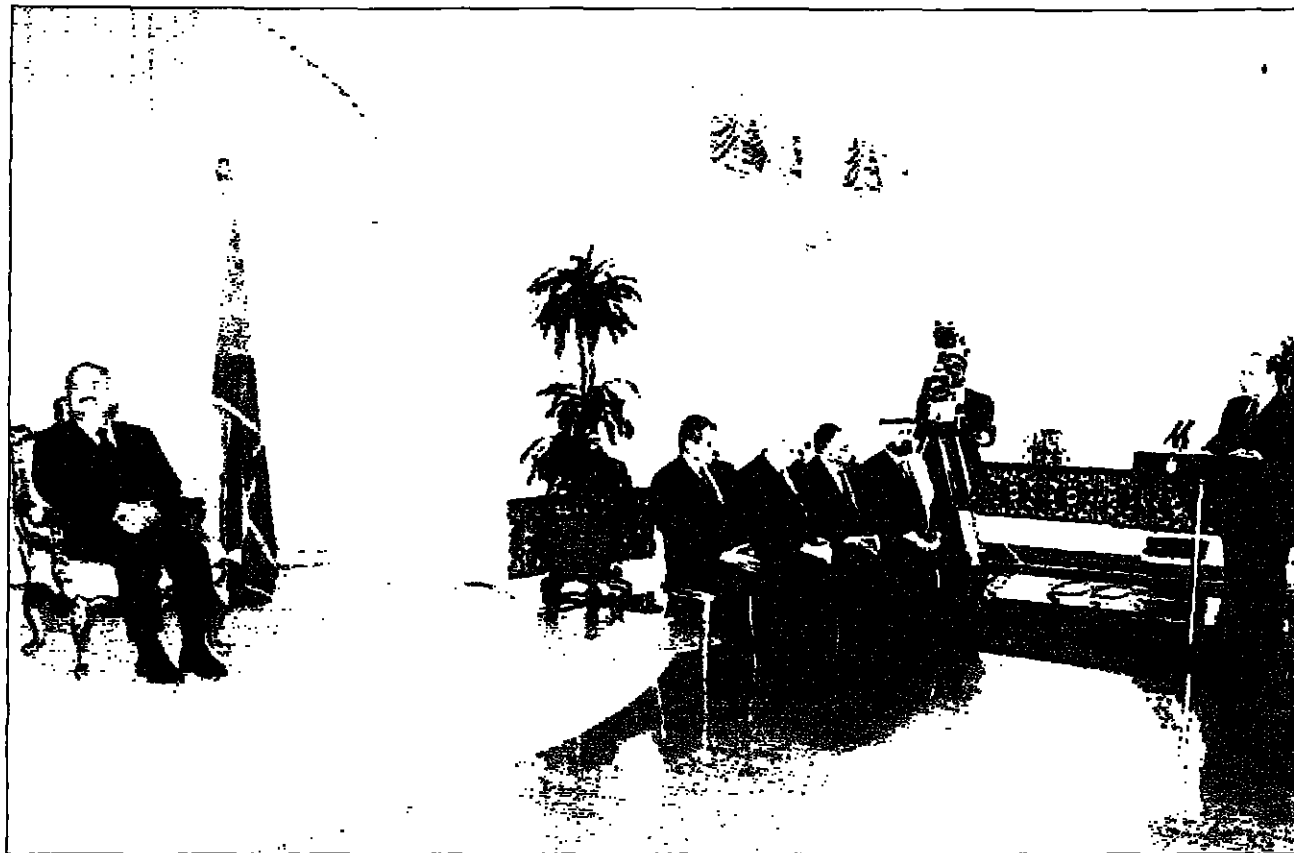
Israel's stand on the issue led many of the estimated 2,250 Palestinian militants held in Israeli jails to begin an open-ended hunger strike on Saturday.

Prisoners families have also organised a 10-day programme of protests, marches and strikes leading up to Clinton's scheduled arrival in the region on Saturday.

The Israeli government meanwhile showed signs of nervousness ahead of Clinton's visit to the Palestinian territories, a first for a president.

A meeting of Netanyahu's cabinet on Sunday saw ministers sharply criticise the prime minister for agreeing to the Clinton trip, which they said would amount to de facto recognition of Palestinian aspirations to statehood.

Palestinian officials confirmed Monday that Clinton plans to fly directly into the new Gaza airport for his visit to the territory despite Israeli objections.



Senate President Zeid Rifai on Monday delivers the Upper House of Parliament's reply to the Speech from the Throne before His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan (Photo by Yousef Al 'Allan)

In reply to Speech from the Throne Upper House pledges close cooperation with government

AMMAN (Petra) — The Senate on Tuesday pledged to closely cooperate with the government in further developing the country.

In reply to the Speech from the Throne, delivered by HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, Senate President Zeid Rifai said the Senate will give due attention to the task of enhancing the role of civic institutions and support the work of the professional unions, the multi-party system and political pluralism.

At a meeting with the Regent at the Royal Court, Rifai highlighted the role of the private sector in Jordan, and pledged the Senate's support for the government's endeavours to

improve the economy, deal with the current recession, address problems of poverty and unemployment, modernise the public administration system, create the opportune atmosphere to attract Arab and foreign investments and help the government pursue the policy of privatisation.

To achieve this, Rifai said, the Senate will support and encourage initiatives of the private sector in handling the recession and help the country develop its tourism industry.

Referring to Palestine, the Upper House reaffirmed its total support for the government's endeavours towards

helping the Palestinian people regain their full and legitimate rights. It said it fully backs Jordan's firm stand to achieve Jordanian-Palestinian integration and supports the peace process on all tracks so that the Middle East can enjoy a lasting and comprehensive peace.

The Senate said it supported the government in its efforts to improve and develop ties with Arab and friendly nations and in enabling the armed and security forces to carry out their national task of protecting the nation.

The Senate's reply to the Speech from the Throne described pluralism in the Kingdom as a source of

power, stressing its support for the government to safeguard national unity and a firm domestic front embodying all Jordanians of different origins and backgrounds.

Rifai expressed the Senate's support for the Regent's call on the government to promote the role of the judiciary to perform as an independent authority and back its endeavours to develop its capabilities.

Present at the meeting were several members of the Royal family. Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh, Chief of the Royal Court Jawad Anani, His Majesty King Hussein's advisers and a number of ministers.

Annan 'cautiously optimistic' on Lockerbie

ABU DHABI (R) — U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan is "cautiously optimistic" after his talks with Libyan President Muammar Qadhafi on the handover of Libyan suspects in the Lockerbie bombing, Meguid said Monday.

The league's secretary-general, Esmat Abdul Meguid, said he had held talks with Annan in Abu Dhabi on the margins of the annual six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) summit, due to open late Monday.

"Over Libya, he [Annan] was cautiously optimistic, so I think there are good chances

that we will reach a solution acceptable to all parties," Meguid said.

Asked whether he could give a date for the handover of the two Libyan suspects in the 1988 bombing of a U.S. airliner over the Scottish town of Lockerbie, Meguid said: "I don't know. But the sooner the better."

"I feel there is a desire on all sides to come to an understanding," he said, adding that the Arab League and Libya had originally put the idea to the United States and Britain of a trial on neutral territory, rather than in Scotland or the United States.

Annan had said after his

Saturday meeting with Qadhafi that he hoped for "good news" soon, but added that Libya's complex decision-making process meant a final agreement needed more time.

The Libyan foreign ministry said Sunday it believed a deal to settle the issue was closer after talks with Annan. The United States and Britain are pressing for the surrender of two alleged Libyan intelligence agents accused of blowing up Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, killing 270 people.

They have agreed to Libya's demand that the trial be held on neutral ground in the Netherlands and are keen

to see the two men turned over before the Dec. 21 anniversary of the bombing.

The United Nations imposed sanctions on Libya in 1992 because it refused to hand over Abdul Basset Ali Mohammad Al Megrahi and Lamen Khalifa Fhimah on the ground that they would not get a fair trial in Scotland or the United States.

Though agreement has been reached on trying the two men in the Netherlands, before a special Scottish court, Tripoli has objected to U.S. and British demands, that, if convicted, they should serve their sentences in Scotland.

Fatchett arrives for talks on bilateral ties, peace, Iraq

AMMAN (J.T.) — British MP Derek Fatchett, minister of state at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, arrived in Amman on Monday for talks with HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, and top officials on the latest developments in the peace process, Iraq, and bilateral relations.

The peace process and the implementation of the Oct. 23 Wye River Memorandum between the Palestinians and Israel will also be the focus of talks between senior officials and EU envoy Miguel Moratinos, arriving here today on a three-day visit.

Foreign Minister Abdul Illah Khatib was scheduled

to hold talks with Fatchett late yesterday, a British embassy official said.

He added that Fatchett will meet the Crown Prince and Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh in separate meetings today, before addressing a press conference.

Fatchett's two-day visit here is part of a regional tour which includes Syria and Jordan.

One Austrian embassy official, whose country currently holds the six-month rotating presidency of the EU, told the Jordan Times that the agenda of Moratinos' visit to the Kingdom included talks with Khatib. He could not disclose further details.

By Alia A. Toukan

AMMAN — When Israel's ambassador to Jordan Oded Eran was asked over a year ago if Jordan would be playing a role in Palestinian-Israeli final status issues, the envoy responded by saying he was certainly not posted in Amman to discuss water matters.

Although the comment initially caused a stir in Jordanian official circles, some analysts and officials are now saying that there is no other way Jordan can secure its own interests unless it does actively participate in several of the final status negotiations.

"There is no way we can impose ourselves," said a senior official requesting anonymity, "but eventually we will have to find a way to be part of the negotiations."

"It might be feasible for us to say straight out 'we have a role and interests.' We might have to do this," the official told the Jordan Times in a recent interview.

Propelled by fears that Israel and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) could present Jordan with a done deal regarding the crucial permanent issues, officials are trying to stake their claim from the outset. "A fait accompli can happen," said the official. "This would be a worst case scenario for Jordan."

For now the country appears to have taken a hands-off approach to these negotiations, while asserting that it be kept informed of every step in the talks so that its interests are reflected in any permanent deal.

The Kingdom's direct stake in

the outcome of negotiations in at least four of the final status issues: refugees, borders, and water, and its "role" in Jerusalem, has clearly been presented to both the Palestinians and Israelis, as well as the Americans, said officials. For the time being, they insisted, all they

While officials still show signs of unease when asked about the Kingdom's "role" in the final status, the discussion of "interests" in the permanent deal has become more acceptable, most notably since His Majesty King Hussein outlined Jordan's policy on the issues in a letter to former prime minister Abdul Salam Majali last December.

Long a sensitive issue in the Kingdom, where more than half of the population is of Palestinian origin, any discussions on the future of the Palestinian state, its borders, capital, and its power, has become a domestic matter. Although Jordan has borne much of the brunt of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, a declared "role" in what is considered to be PNA affairs, touches a raw nerve among some Palestini-

ans on both sides of the river, and sometimes even among "East Bank" Jordanians.

In addition, there are always mutual Jordanian-PNA suspicions to consider. While the Kingdom tries to assert its interests in any permanent deal, it is careful not to exacerbate Palestinian fears over Jordan's future role in its affairs — "a delicate balance," conceded one official.

There is also apprehension that Israeli attempts to bring Jordan into the negotiating room will be used as a leverage against Palestinian aspirations for sovereignty and statehood. But officials in Amman have maintained that the Kingdom will not become an unwitting partner to Israeli "designs" for a limited Palestinian entity.

(Continued on page 12)

Clinton's visit under fire in Israel

TEL AVIV (AP) — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, reflecting growing Israeli unease over an upcoming visit by U.S. President Bill Clinton, suggested today that the trip was entirely Clinton's initiative.

"What am I going to tell him, not to come — don't come? I can prevent him from coming?" Netanyahu asked rhetorically in an interview on my radio. "We're not accustomed to refusing someone who wants to come."

In another sign of tensions rising from the trip, the speaker of Israel's parliament, Dan Tichon, said he intended to boycott events with Clinton because the president did not plan to address the Knesset.

Clinton's visit to Israel, which begins Saturday, is to be coupled with a stop in the Gaza Strip, the first by a sitting U.S. president.

The United States has repeatedly said the trip is not intended as an endorsement of Palestinian aspirations for statehood, but the Palestinians see it as a powerful boost to their sovereignty hopes.

Speaking Monday to reporters in Gaza, Palestinian President Yasser Arafat hailed the upcoming trip as "historic and great."

The presidential visit to Israel and the Palestinian lands is meant to encourage both sides to stick to the timetable set out in the Wye River accords signed in October.

However, Netanyahu said Clinton's trip "has value only if it strengthens the Palestinian fulfillment of their obligations" under the agreement.

In recent weeks, Israel and the Palestinians have accused one another of failing to live up to various provisions, and Israel has threatened to hold off on a scheduled Dec. 18

troop pullback. Palestinians, for their part, are angry over stepped-up Jewish settlement activity in the West Bank and Israel's failure to free hundreds of prisoners jailed for anti-Israel activity.

Israel released the first 250 of a promised 750 Palestinian prisoners last month, but they were mainly criminals, not so-called security prisoners as the Palestinians have demanded.

In response, Palestinians have staged protests that have repeatedly boiled over into violent street clashes. More demonstrations were taking place in several West Bank towns Monday.

The controversy over Clinton's visit also comes as Netanyahu is trying to quell a potential parliamentary rebellion. Opposition from within his coalition to Israel's ceding of West Bank land has forced Netanyahu to seek new allies to prop up his government. A vote on early elections was possible later Monday.

Netanyahu has been sparing publicly with his former foreign minister, David Levy, who considered rejoining the shaky governing coalition in exchange for the finance minister's job.

The prime minister said the two couldn't agree on economic principles and that he wouldn't sacrifice Israel's economy to coalition politics.

The Clinton visit has exacerbated tensions within the government. At Sunday's Israeli cabinet meeting, a shouting match erupted over it, according to Israel Radio.

"Who invited President Clinton to the Gaza Strip?" Silvan Shalom, the science minister, reportedly yelled at Netanyahu. Netanyahu said it had been Clinton's idea, not his.

Hardliners win in northern Cyprus vote

NICOSIA (AP) — Dervis Eroglu, prime minister in the breakaway Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, was declared the winner today in parliamentary elections. The result was a show of approval for the government's hard-line stance toward reunification of the island.

According to initial results, Eroglu, 60, clinched 40.3 per cent of the votes, winning 24 of 50 seats in parliament in Sunday's voting, the Turkish Cypriot news agency TAK reported. It was not clear if he would be able to govern alone or would have to rule by coalition.

"It is a victory for our national cause," said Rauf Denktaş, president of the breakaway state. "The victory of a majority that is loyal to Turkey, and determined to keep the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus living, should be a nice message to the world."

The elections were marred by a row between Denktaş and an opposition centre-left party. Denktaş has accused the party of trying to undermine the Turkish Cypriot cause by favouring the island's membership in the European Union (EU).

Denktaş contends Cyprus' membership in the EU would amount to the island's integration with EU member Greece. He opposes entry before Turkey is made a member of the EU.

The tensions increased when Denktaş openly called on voters to vote for centre-right parties — including one led by his son, Serdar Denktaş.



Turkish Cypriots supporting the National Unity Party led by Prime Minister Dervis Eroglu light torches and wave flags as they celebrate their election victory in Nicosia early Monday. Eroglu's party won 24 of 50 seats in the parliament, 40.33 per cent of the votes, in the Dec. 6 general elections in which more than 120,000 Turkish Cypriots participated (Reuters photo)

— which he regards as loyal to Turkey.

Serdar Denktaş' Democrat Party got 22.6 per cent of the votes and is likely to take 13 of the parliamentary seats, while the centre-left Republican Turkish Party got 13.3 per cent with only six seats.

Cyprus has been divided

since 1974, when Turkey sent in troops after a coup by Greek Cypriots seeking union with Greece. The Turkish Cypriots declared their own state in 1983 but it is only recognised by Turkey.

Numerous United Nations efforts to reunify the island have failed. Denktaş is now

demanding international recognition for his state before talks can resume.

Turkish Cypriot opposition parties complained that the election would be dominated by the large number of settlers from the Turkish mainland who have been given voting rights.

A recent report by the EU Commission put the number of recent settlers at 111,000 out of a population of 200,000. Opposition parties say about half the candidates are settlers.

More than 87 per cent of some 121,000 eligible voters turned up at voting stations on Sunday.

Turkish coalition government search drags out

By Elif Unal
Reuters

ANKARA — The search for a new Turkish government stalled Monday when Prime Minister-designate Bülent Ecevit and a conservative leader failed to agree on the make-up of a proposed coalition.

Fractious party leaders have until the end of the year to forge a government before President Süleyman Demirel can dissolve parliament and set up an interim cabinet to take the country to elections.

Five governments have fallen in three years in Turkey, now facing the threat of economic recession and large-scale unemployment.

Leftist Ecevit said conservative Tansu Çiller did not look favourably on an offer he made to form a three-way coalition

that would include outgoing Prime Minister Mesut Yılmaz.

"She gave no definite answer to my offer but it is clear that she does not look warmly on it," he told a news conference after an hour of talks with Çiller.

Yılmaz and Çiller are bitter personal rivals.

Çiller, who became Turkey's first woman prime minister in 1993, wants to see more parties in a new ruling alliance, including perhaps the Islamists.

"We don't object to Ecevit as prime minister, the condition that it be a broad-based government is essential," she told a news conference. She is to meet Ecevit again later this week.

The Islamist Virtue Party (FP) is the biggest group in parliament but secularist politicians have been wary of it

since the army forced an Islamist-led government from office last year. Ecevit has said he does not want Islamists in his cabinet.

"If this is democracy, why don't we include the FP? It is being excluded," the *Hürriyet* daily quoted Mehmet Gülhan, an aide to Çiller, as saying.

Ecevit was appointed to form a government after Yılmaz's minority coalition collapsed last month over corruption charges.

Whatever government takes shape will probably be only temporary. Parliament has set elections for in April 1999.

The latest political crisis has rattled the Istanbul stock market, which was down 1.64 per cent at the close of trade.

Business groups warn that world financial woes are triggering large-scale layoffs in

Turkey and intensifying pressure for new economic policies.

The slowdown is being felt most acutely in the vital textile sector, focused in the Aegean region.

"The crisis is escalating by the day. The sector's problems must be addressed immediately," said Hasan Özmen, chairman of the Chamber of Commerce in the Aegean regional capital of Izmir.

A prominent economist said Turkey would lurch into recession next year and foreign exchange difficulties would escalate unless remedial measures were taken urgently.

"Turkey's economy will shrink in 1999 unless necessary steps are taken," Professor Esfender Korkmaz, head of Istanbul University's economics faculty, told Reuters in an

interview.

On the international stage, a diplomatic row with Italy awaits the new government. Turkey has demanded that Rome hand over Kurdish rebel leader Abdullah Öcalan for trial but Italy's constitution prevents his extradition to a country which has the death penalty.

The dispute looks set to widen. Turkey criticised the European Parliament Friday for its adoption of a report on Turkey's 14-year-old conflict with Kurds seeking self-rule in the southeast of the country.

Officials of a Kurdish political party said Monday that police had detained around 200 of its supporters to try to halt a hunger strike in protest against a crackdown on Kurdish activism.

Political activists to attend Palestinian opposition meeting in Damascus

By Tareq Ayyoub

AMMAN — A Jordanian-Palestinian delegation will leave next week to Damascus to attend a conference sponsored by Palestinian opposition groups to counter President Yasser Arafat's plan to amend the Palestinian National Charter.

Bahjat Abu Gharbiyah, a veteran pan-Arabist Palestinian figure who opposes peace deals with Israel, said the two-day conference will also stress the Palestinian right to fight Israeli occupation.

The conference, organised by leftist and Islamist Palestinian organisations, will coincide with a planned meeting next week of the Palestinian National Council in Gaza, which U.S. President Bill Clinton is expected to attend.

The Gaza conference will be held in line with the Nov. 23 Wye River agreement signed by Palestinian and Israeli negotiators which paved the way for further

Israeli army redeployments in the West Bank.

Israel demanded the cancellation of articles in the charter that call for the liberation of Palestine as a pre-condition to signing the Wye agreement.

The Damascus-based Palestinian opposition groups rejected Arafat's plans and said they would hold a similar meeting to counter his intention to amend the charter, proclaimed in 1964 when the Palestine Liberation Organisation was established.

At least 67 Palestinians and Jordanians representing opposition groups in Amman will attend the conference to be held on Saturday.

Among the Jordanian figures expected to attend the conference are Leith Shbeilat, the president of the Jordan Bar Association, Hussein Mjali, and the overall leader of Muslim Brotherhood, Abdul Majeed Thneibat.

"The meeting is a protest against Arafat's plan to give legitimacy to the Israeli occu-

pation of our land," Abu Gharbiyah told the Jordan Times.

"The gathering is aimed at preserving the conviction of our people that Palestine from the River Jordan to the shores of the Mediterranean is a historical Palestinian land and that we retain the right to continue our resistance to Israeli occupation," he added.

"The conference is the final trench of the opposition, and our message is that any outcome of the Gaza meeting is null and void," Abu Gharbiyah said.

Yasser Za'atreh, an Islamist who was invited to attend the meeting, described the Damascus meeting as a "cry" of the Palestinian opposition against the Palestinian leader's policy.

"Our meeting will not succeed in destroying the peace treaty with Israel," Za'atreh said. "It is merely an attempt to awaken the awareness of the Palestinian people not to accept any concessions granted to the Israelis."

Israel refuses to extradite Polish labour camp chief

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel has refused an extradition request from Poland for a former commander of a Stalinist labour camp accused of genocide for the deaths in 1945 of some 2,000 inmates, officials said Monday.

A Polish court issued an international arrest warrant charging Salomon Morel, the former commander of the Swietochlowice labour

camp in southern Poland, with genocide.

Morel later emigrated to Israel and Poland forwarded an extradition request to Israeli authorities earlier this year.

"We refused the extradition request because of the time factor and we gave the legal explanation according to the relevant laws in Israel," said a spokeswoman for the Israeli justice ministry.

Israeli law prohibits the extradition of Israeli citizens.

The Swietochlowice camp in southern Poland was administered by the Soviet political police and later by their Polish counterparts.

During 1945, half the camp's some 4,000 inmates died, according to Polish authorities.

U.S. drops Iran, Malaysia from list of illegal drug producers

WASHINGTON (AFP) —

The United States dropped Iran and Malaysia from its list of countries considered to be major drug producers or transit nations, the White House said Monday. President Bill Clinton made his decision known to Congress in a letter made public by the White House.

The countries still on the

list include: Afghanistan, Aruba, the Bahamas, Belize, Burma, Bolivia, Brazil, Cambodia, China, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Haiti, Hong Kong, India, Jamaica, Laos, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the Dominican Republic, Taiwan, Thailand, Venezuela and Vietnam.

Iran had been considered by the United States to be a major producer of illegal drugs since 1987. Malaysia was on the list in the category of transit nation.

"This year I removed Iran and Malaysia from the list of major drug producing countries and designated them as countries of concern," the president's letter said.

10 killed, 15 wounded as militiamen clash in southern Somalia port

MOGADISHU (DPA) — At least 10 people were killed and 15 wounded in heavy clashes between rival militiamen in the southern Somali port of Merca, it was reported in Mogadishu on Monday.

Fighting broke out Sunday afternoon when militiamen attacked another armed

group in the centre of the town which is controlled by faction leader Hussein Muhammad Aided, reports from Merca said.

The fighting broke out in an area where narcotic leaves known as qat are sold. Two militiamen and a man selling fuel were killed and five people were wound-

ed. Elders from the town tried to intervene to stop the fighting which continued sporadically before flaring up again in the evening as more militiamen became involved, it was reported.

According to reliable sources in Merca, heavily armed militiamen using

battle wagons attacked the town's hospital in an attempt to get a known street fighter named Baderi who was injured in the initial clashes.

Hospital security guards returned fire, and in the subsequent fighting at least seven people were killed and ten wounded. The victims included a woman tea-

shop vendor who was hit by a stray bullet near the hospital.

Heavy explosions from a Russian-made B-10 anti-tank gun and rocket-propelled grenades were heard throughout the town, 100 kilometres south of Mogadishu.

The same rival militia, who have been in the town since the beginning of the civil war eight years ago, clashed two months ago at Shalabod town, about 15 kilometres north of Merca.

The fighting came as a World Food Programme ship carrying food aid mainly for the famine-stricken regions of Bay, Bakol and Gedo was being offloaded.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 4773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

15:10 Children's French Programme
15:30 ...Cartoon - Baranes in Pyjamas
16:00 ...Doc - Life Choices
16:30 ...Small Talk
17:00 ...Doc - Mothers of the Wild
18:15 ...French Programmes
19:00 ...Les Yeux D'Helene
19:15 ...Le Journal
19:30 ...French Programme
19:35 ...News headlines
20:00 ...What Would You Do?
20:30 ...Drama - Tom Jones
21:05 ...Doc - You and Your Car
21:30 ...UN Cut
22:00 ...News in English
22:30 ...Lonesome Dove
23:10 ...Feature film - "Ice Pawn"
00:30 ...End of T.X.

PRAYER TIMES

04:56 ...Fajr
06:18 ...Sunrise/Duha
11:27 ...Dhuhr
14:13 ...Asr
16:26 ...Maghrib
17:59 ...Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweith, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel.

4622266
Anglican Church Tel. 4624853/4624811.
St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 4771751.
Amman International Church Tel. 5865897
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 5688404
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 5811295
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Tel. 4654932
St. John the Baptist at De la Salle College Tel. 5661757
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 4637340
Greek Orthodox Church Tel. 4646138
Church of Presentation, Sweith Tel. 5920146
The Uniate Catholic Church Tel. 4624757
The English-Language Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel. 4892679
The Baptist Church Tel. 4628052
The Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 4771331
The American Orthodox Church Tel. 4775261

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Depart-

ment of Meteorology
Temperatures are expected to drop slightly and skies partly cloudy. Scattered showers are expected with winds southeasterly to westerly moderate. In Aqaba, it will be dusty, cloudy, winds northerly moderate, and seas calm.

Amman 12/21
Aqaba 14/27
Deserts 10/22
Jordan Valley 15/27

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 24, Aqaba 29 Humidity readings: Amman 27 per cent, Aqaba 25 per cent.
Following are the temperatures expected today in the following areas:

Ajloun 06/16
Jerash 11/22
Um Qays 11/21
Madaba 10/20
Petra 11/22
Dead Sea 16/27

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Mutahar Mazharah 5150312

Dr. Abdul Hadi Tayyib 4620115
Dr. Wisam Hazzayin 4748563
Dr. Haidi Hammam 5153776

AMMAN:
Firas Pharmacy 5661912
Al Salam Pharmacy 4636730
Mayadah Pharmacy 5537004
Raka Al Dawa Pharmacy 5536169

IRBID:
Dr. Lutfi Shibli (02)241788
Fou'ad Pharmacy (02)275360

ZARQA:
Dr. Salah Saffarini (09)987565
Palestine Pharmacy (09)983562

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 4637111
Civil Defence Department 5661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 4630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police. 192, 4621111, 4637777
Fire Brigade 4617101
Blood Bank 4775121
Highway Police 5343402
Traffic Police 4896390
Public Security Dept. 4630321
Hotel Complaints 5605800
Price Complaints 5661176
Water & Sewage Complaints 4897467
Amman Municipality Complaints 4787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 0132
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 4623101
Abdali Tel. Repairs 5661101
Jordan Television 4773111
Radio Jordan
..... 4774111
Water Authority 5680100
J. Electricity Authority 5815615
Electric Power Co. 4636381
RJ Flight Information 44-53200
Queen Alia Int. Airport 44-53300

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 5921199
The Islamic Abdul 56661317
Husseini Medical Centre 5856856
Luzmila 4630195
Khalidi Maternity 4642816
Alkhalid Maternity 4642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 4642362
Malhas, J. Amman 4636140
Palestine Shmeisani 5607071
Shmeisani Hospital 5607431
Jordan Hospital 5607550
University Hospital 5353444
Al-Muasher Hospital 5667279
Al-Ahli, Abdali 56641646
Al-Bashir 4775111/26
Al-Bashir 4891611/15
Army, Marka 5157100
Queen Alia Hospital 5607155
Al Amal Cancer Centre 5353000

ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital (09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986731
Al Hikma Modern Hospital (09)990990

IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital (02)275555
Roman Catholic Hospital (02)272275
Ibn Al Nafess Hospital (02)7101372, (02)7103101
Rosary Sisters Hospital (02)7102831, (02)7102011
Speciality Hospital (02)7103100

AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital (03)2040111

FOR THE TRAVELLER QUEEN ALIA AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (44)53200-5, where it should always be verified. Information on other flights can be supplied on phone 44 (52700). Information on Royal Wings flights can be supplied on phone 4875201.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
05:50 Tehran (RJ)
07:15 Sana'a (RJ)
07:30 Damascus (RJ)
09:25 Abu Dhabi (RJ)
10:05 Muscat, Dubai (RJ)
10:15 Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
16:20 Cairo (RJ)
17:30 London, Frankfurt (RJ)
17:30 Chicago, Amsterdam (RJ)
23:10 Beirut (RJ)

Other Flights
12:30 Aden (YY)
14:35 Istanbul (TK)
18:00 Dubai, Damascus (EK)
18:40 Beirut (ME)
18:45 Kiev (6U)
19:05 Paris (AF)
20:25 Tel Aviv (LY)
20:40 Cairo (MS)
22:25 London, Damascus (BA)
23:35 Amsterdam (KL)
23:55 Larnaca (CY)
00:55 Bucharest (RO)
02:00 Rome (AZ)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights
09:30 Aqaba (arriving at QAIA) (RW)
11:10 Aqaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)
16:00 Aqaba (arriving at Marka

Airport) (RW)
18:45 Tel Aviv (arriving at QAIA) (RW)
22:50 Aqaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
08:25 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
11:05 Vienna, Frankfurt (RJ)
11:55 Geneva, Paris (RJ)
12:15 London (RJ)
12:30 Cairo (RJ)
13:55 Madrid (RJ)
19:35 Beirut (RJ)
20:30 Jeddah (RJ)
20:45 Damascus (RJ)
21:00 Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)

Other Flights
07:10 Frankfurt (LH)
13:30 Aden (YY)
15:35 Istanbul (TK)
19:00 Dubai (EK)
19:40 Kiev (6U)
20:00 Beirut (ME)
21:10 Tel Aviv (LY)
21:40 Cairo (MS)
00:35 Amsterdam (KL)
01:55 Bucharest (RO)
03:00 Rome (AZ)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights
07:00 Aqaba (from Marka Airport) (RW)
08:30 Aqaba (from Marka Airport) (RW)
16:30 Tel Aviv (from Marka Airport) (RW)
20:30 Aqaba (from QAIA) (RW)



MINISTERS INSPECT UMARI BORDER POST: Interior Minister Nayef Qadi and Minister of Transport and Public Works Nasser Lawzi on Monday visit the Umari border post to inspect preparations for an integrated plan existing buildings and rehabilitating the post's infrastructure. During the visit, custom officials said this year's revenues totalled nearly JD16 million. The two ministers also visited Saudi Arabia's Hadeithah border post and held talks with Saudi officials on boosting bilateral cooperation (Petra photo)

Norway to provide 'early warning' system for Yarmouk water quality

By a Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The government Monday said Norway has agreed to provide Jordan with an "early warning" system to monitor the quality of Yarmouk River water flowing into the Zai Water Treatment Plant through the King Abdullah Canal.

Water Ministry Secretary General Qusai Qutieshat, who left for Oslo yesterday to participate in a three-day bilateral meeting on water, said the system will be set up "soon" on the convergence point of the river and the canal.

Qutieshat added that following the installation of the early warning system by next summer, four monitoring stations will be constructed on the Yarmouk-King Abdullah Canal convergence point, the Lake Tiberias intake and on the canal.

Qutieshat provided no further details on the early warning system or the meeting in Oslo.

Two weeks ago, Jordan and Syria agreed to set up a similar system on the Yarmouk River. The Syrians agreed to set up several water stations to monitor the

river's water before it reaches Jordan, which plans to construct a JD50 million wastewater treatment plant near the border. The system also includes plans by Syria to provide Amman with a weekly report on the quality of river water entering the Kingdom.

Jordanian officials have complained in recent months about receiving low-quality water from the Yarmouk River because of wastewater that was leaking into the river's tributaries in Syria.

Damascus has so far made no official comment on the

Jordanian complaints.

The river, which provides the country with 135 million cubic metres (mcm) of water a year, begins in Syria, flows along the two countries' border and then joins the Jordan River downstream from Lake Tiberias.

The country's population, increasing by 3.5 per cent annually, will need 1.2 billion cubic metres of water per year between 1998 and 2000. But the Kingdom's current water resources only amount to 960 million cubic metres a year, according to official figures.

Prime minister meets with Brotherhood leader Thneibat

Discussion covers 'everything of concern' — minister

By Francesca Ciriaci

AMMAN — A meeting held on Sunday between Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh and the overall leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, Abdul Majeed Thneibat, covered "everything of concern to either party," an official said yesterday.

"They discussed everything," Information Minister Nasser Judeh told a regular press briefing.

Thneibat, who visited His Majesty King Hussein in the U.S. on Nov. 24, declined to comment on his talks with

Tarawneh, which had not been announced by either the government or the Brotherhood.

But Judeh denied that the meeting had been deliberately held in secrecy.

"Part and parcel of the premier's daily office work is to receive and meet with representatives of different political parties, professional unions, the private sector, economists, and others," Judeh said.

"Not every meeting is publicised or announced. This is part of his daily office work and this meeting was in line

with the premier's work."

A report in the Arabic daily Al Dustour announced on Monday that a meeting had been held between Tarawneh and Interior Minister Nayef Qadi, and Thneibat and Abdul Latif Arabiyat, secretary general of the Brotherhood's political arm, the Islamic Action Front.

Arabiyat, who was out of the country yesterday, was not available for comment.

A crisis between the government of former Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali and the opposition peaked when the Muslim Brother-

hood launched a general boycott of the November 1997 parliamentary elections.

Official contacts with the movement resumed after a meeting between HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, and the Executive Council of the Brotherhood in September.

In his speech from the Throne delivered on Nov. 28, the Regent mentioned the "national dialogue" between all civil society institutions as one of the main tasks of the Tarawneh government.

Israel to allow Jordan-bound foreign planes to fly through Israeli airspace

New JD4 million radar station to be built

AMMAN (J.T.) — Israel has decided to allow foreign airlines to use its airspace while en route to Jordan, an official said Monday.

Jasser Ziyad, director general of the Civil Aviation Authority, said Jordan has to study the Israeli decision carefully because according to Israeli regulations, planes using Israeli airspace en route to another country are only allowed to fly at an altitude of 1,000 feet, which the authority says is unsafe, especially at peak hours when there are more than 14 airplanes flying in the same

airspace.

"Israel is allowing planes to fly through the bottleneck only," said Ziyad.

His remarks were made during Jordan's celebration of International Civil Aviation Day.

In 1994, Jordan signed a transport agreement with Israel, but the Jewish state has never allowed Jordan-bound foreign airlines to use its airspace. Under the agreement, Royal Jordanian, the national air carrier, and El Al, the Israeli airline, can both use the other country's airspace.

Meanwhile, Ziyad said Jordan is building a new radar station at an estimated cost of JD4 million which is due to be completed by summer 1999. The new radar station will enable Jordan to cope with the expected increase in air traffic over the Kingdom stemming from the Israeli decision to open its airspace to foreign airlines.

In another development, the government has decided to cancel an article from civil aviation regulations that requires passengers in transit to pay JD3.5 for flying through any of the Jordanian's three airports, Queen Alia International, Marka and Aqaba.

Airlines and tourism companies had complained that the fees would have a negative impact on their industries.

According to civil aviation figures, transit passengers constitute 60 per cent of RJ ticket sales.

Ziyad earlier told the Jordan Times that the new regulation would have increased the Civil Aviation Authority revenues by JD3.5 million.

UNRWA marks 49th anniversary amid severe financial constraints

By Hind-Lara Mango

AMMAN — The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA) is celebrating its 49th anniversary amid severe financial strains that have forced it to cut back on vital secondary services.

UNRWA offers health, education and social services to nearly 3.5 million Palestinian refugees living in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip after they fled their homes during the 1948 war which led to Israel's creation.

With a \$60 million budget deficit, the agency, which together with other U.N. bodies is preparing to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on Dec. 10, says it has never been in such financial dire straits.

"Financial crisis are not new to UNRWA," said Gunnar Lofberg, director of UNRWA operations in Jordan, home to 1.5 million U.N.-registered refugees.

"But rarely has UNRWA faced a financial crisis as the current one... and never at a more critical moment," Lofberg told the Jordan Times.

"We have managed to continue to provide acceptable basic services, but it is a matter of time before this equation becomes impossible," he said. "Cuts in certain services are inevitable if there is no increase in funds."

This year's budget stands at \$342.9 million. UNRWA's delicate task, amidst political uncertainty clouding the future of Middle East peace, is further compounded by increases in operational costs coupled with contributions by donors that have generally maintained a steady level.

The refugee population, growing at 3.5 per cent annually, is placing massive strains on UNRWA's services.

However, Lofberg said the agency, set up a year after the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, continues its struggle to fulfil the objectives of its mandate.

"Our mandate follows many of the elements of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights... particularly the universal right to a standard of living adequate to provide for the health and well-



A refugee reads a newspaper in Al Baggaa camp. UNRWA, which provides services to 1.5 million refugees in Jordan, is facing serious financial difficulties on the 49th anniversary of its creation (File photo)

being of everyone," he said.

"This includes food, medical care, social services, and the right to security in event of sickness and disability," Lofberg added.

Arab countries hosting refugees have long urged world donors to continue supporting UNRWA. But most are unable to increase annual donations because of other internal priorities and overall situations worsened by the global economic slump.

"Donors have been paying up their dues, but the deficit has widened because UNRWA's needs have increased [due to the population increase] and so have the cost and quality of services," Lofberg explained.

"We find ourselves trying to provide the same quality of services as we have always done with less funds," he said. "This means that staff are expected to work harder for a larger number of refugees."

UNRWA Commissioner General Peter Hansen personally intervened earlier this year to avert a looming crisis sparked by an UNRWA staff decision to stage an open-ended strike across the region to push for better working conditions and cleaner remuneration.

UNRWA's 6,000-strong staff come mainly from the refugee community. Most say they are frustrated because of heavy work loads and a freeze on new recruitment as well as salaries that do not match the rising cost of living.

"We pay our area staff according to government salaries,"

said Lofberg. Most UNRWA workers say their salaries should not be compared to low government salaries but to the relatively lucrative packages offered to employees of other U.N. agencies.

The U.N. General Assembly voted last month to extend the agency's mandate for another three years.

Asked about the fate of employees in case UNRWA's mandate is terminated after this period, Lofberg said long-term staff will be compensated.

"But for those who have been employed since the 1990's on a three-year contract basis, their work ends with the contract," Lofberg said.

UNRWA has adopted a series of austerity measures over the past five years, including a 20 per cent cut in international staff and cuts in hospitalisation subsidies. "This means that refugees now are only subsidised at government hospitals," Lofberg said.

The agency has also frozen scholarships for students from refugee camps and restricted services offered by rehabilitation shelters in camps to "special hardship cases."

Though local governments have generally introduced cuts to funds offered to most U.N. agencies in Jordan, UNRWA has managed to escape such moves.

"The Jordanian government is providing us with assistance which has helped us maintain the standard of our services," Lofberg said.

Officials say the government spends over \$300 million a year on refugee camps to support their infrastructure and improve water and sewage networks.

His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, has encouraged donors to provide more funds to UNRWA by personally accompanying most foreign state guests on tours of camps to offer them a glimpse of the squalid life of refugees.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Tourism workshop opens next week

AMMAN (Petra) — The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, in conjunction with the International Tourism Organisation, next Monday will open a two-day workshop entitled "Tourism and the Media." The seminar aims at encouraging Middle Eastern and North African countries to develop media strategies in order to improve their images as tourist destinations. Information Minister Nasser Judeh will open the event with Tourism and Antiquities Minister Akel Biltaji. Representatives from several countries and specialists from the public and private sectors will take part in the workshop, which will include tours to Petra, Madaba and the Dead Sea.

Minister meets with EU delegation

AMMAN (Petra) — Agriculture Minister Mijhem Khreisha on Monday held talks with a European Union delegation in charge of developing food programmes. Khreisha's meeting with the delegation, which is on a three-month official visit, included topics such as expanding agricultural projects, exploiting more land and improving living standards.

Arab council official arrives

AMMAN (Petra) — The secretary general of the Arab Interior Ministers Council, Ahmad Ben Mohamad Al Salem, Monday arrived in Amman for an official visit to discuss preparations for the Arab interior ministers conference, which will be held in Amman next December. He will also discuss bilateral issues with Interior Minister Nayef Qadi, who will head the first meeting of the conference's preparatory committee today.

Ministry to begin meals programme

AMMAN (Petra) — The Education Ministry announced Monday that it will provide free meals to students in poor and less developed regions of the country beginning at the start of the second term of the 1998-1999 academic year. Mahmoud Massad, the ministry's director of general education, said the ministry has allocated JD773,000 for the programme, which is expected to benefit at least 10,000 children in elementary grades. The meals programme aims at helping children enjoy balanced and healthy mental and physical growth, said Massad, who expressed hope that the programme would also curtail the dropout rate as well as bolster cooperation between students' families and schools and develop the concept of "partners in education." The school meals programme will be carried out in Maan, Southern Shouneh, Deir Alla, Aqaba, Tafleh and the northern badia regions, he added.

Regional music training centre for teachers to be set up in Amman

By Susan Resheq

AMMAN — Participants at a seminar focusing on integrating music into early education agreed on Monday to go ahead with plans to set up an Amman-based regional music training centre for kindergarten and nursery teachers.

They decided to study the feasibility of the project after securing pledges of support from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), the Arab Academy of Music, the International Music Council and other foundations.

"The centre will operate under the supervision of the National Music Conservatory and other foundations," said Kifah Fakhoury, director of the NMC, which is run by the Noor Al Hussein Foundation.

"It might also become an international training centre," Fakhoury told the Jordan Times at the end of the three-day workshop, attended by music officials and specialists from several international agencies and Arab countries.

Officials did not give any estimate of the project's cost but said it would rely on outside funding as well as revenue from its own operations, including producing music programmes for teachers.

"UNESCO is the main donor for the project," Fakhoury added.

Participants at the seminar called for the introduction of music into kindergartens and nurseries to provide young students with skills and tools to

enable them to cope with day-to-day challenges brought about by globalisation and the "information highway."

Children also need to know who they are, where they come from and how to find joy through discovering arts, music, literature and nature, they said.

Participants also focused on the establishment of early childhood programmes in music as well as curricula to train nursery and kindergarten teachers on carrying out the delicate task.

They stressed that such music teachers need special qualities including respect for young children and love for music, while high-quality programmes and curricula should be developed to make such teaching fun.

"In other early childhood settings, such as community music schools and private studios, people who are highly trained musicians will sometimes assume that they can teach young children by simply watering down their existing materials," said Carol Scott-Kassner, professor of Music Education at the University of Central Florida.

"Music is very important for young children as a mean of self-expression," she added. "Music can also help mankind develop feelings, fine taste, mental capabilities and skills of movement."

Participants from the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Sudan, Syria and Lebanon indicated that their countries could benefit from the seminar and said they will attend future meetings.

What's going on

THEATRE
• "Devil's Advocate" at Books@Cafe, Jabel Amman at 8:30 p.m. (Tel: 4650457)
ANNUAL CHOIR
• Annual Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) choir at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m. (daily until Dec. 10).
SIGNING CEREMONY
• Signing ceremony of the book "The Horizon of Changes in Arabic Novels" issued by Darat Al Funun, at Darat Al Funun, Jabel Weibdeh at 6:00 p.m.
LECTURE
• "Works by the Jordanian Archaeologists in Bahrain" by Dr. Mohamed Najjar at the French of Archaeology Centre on Wednesday Dec. 9 at 6:30 p.m.
EXHIBITIONS
• Opening of a United Nations exhibition on human rights related activities at the Royal Cultural Centre on Wednesday Dec. 9 at 4:00 p.m., until Dec. 10.
• Photography exhibition "Eropeintes" (a photography trip from Morocco to Turkey) at the French Cultural Centre, Jabel Amman, until Dec. 17.
• Works of 17 British artists and painters from the Nineteenth Century at the British Council, Jabel Amman, until Dec. 18.

• Oil paintings by Ali Najjar at Instituto Cervantes, Jabel Amman, until Dec. 14.
• The Tenth Anniversary Exhibition of Contemporary Arab Artists at Darat Al Funun, Jabel Weibdeh (Tel. 4643251/2), until Jan. 28.
• Photography exhibition entitled "Windows and Doors" by Hani Hattari at Baladna Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5537598), until Dec. 18.

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Chavez wins Venezuela presidency

CARACAS (R) — Failed coup leader Hugo Chavez, a radical populist whose platform alarms the business community, scored a landslide win in Venezuela's presidential vote Sunday, obtaining at the ballot box what he tried to win with bullets.

With more than two-thirds of votes counted, the charismatic former paratrooper was elected to rule the oil-rich country for the next five years after campaigning on a nationalist anti-establishment stance that appealed to the impoverished masses.

His closest rival, Yale-educated businessman Henrique Salas, conceded defeat following official results showing Chavez ahead with 56.2 per cent of the vote compared to 39.7 per cent for him.

"I accept the victory of my adversary and wish him a lot of luck," a tired but relaxed Salas told reporters.

Chavez, 44, portrayed by his opponents as a dangerous leftist rabble rouser with autocratic tendencies, said he would prove his critics wrong following a victory likely to send jitters through Wall Street.

"Investors will find a serious government with honest people," he said minutes after the first results were announced.

"We welcome all those willing to invest in our productive sectors," he told a local television network.

Chavez, who burst on the

national scene with his bloody putsch on Feb. 4, 1992, had been for months the clear favourite to succeed Rafael Caldera, 82, who was constitutionally barred from seeking reelection.

Chavez, who has been denied a U.S. travel visa, said he received a telephone call from the White House but did not say from whom.

Wild celebrations by Chavez supporters, with people dancing in the streets and throwing firecrackers, erupted in Caracas.

"Chavez is the only one with a feeling for the people," said Milagros Trujillo, 39, a nurse and mother of five wearing the Chavez traditional red beret of the special forces he led.

"Now we're going to have a real democracy where the people decide... the corrupt ones will have to leave."

Chavez campaigned on pledges to rewrite the constitution, rid the country of what he called antiquated political patronage and distribute the wealth of the world's third largest oil exporter.

His critics accused him of wanting to create a regime modelled on Cuba's Fidel Castro, whom he visited in 1994 months after his release from two years in jail.

One of his first statements as president-elect was to deny he would impose "a Cuban-style dictatorship."

The election campaign

divided Venezuela along class lines with Chavez riding a tide of popular anger at falling living standards and rampant corruption.

Salas, a 62-year-old respected former state governor, appealed largely to the wealthy pro-American elite alarmed by Chavez's military background and leftist platform.

"You can ask anyone on this street, and there won't be a single one not voting for Chavez," said Jose, 33, a labourer from a poor Caracas neighbourhood.

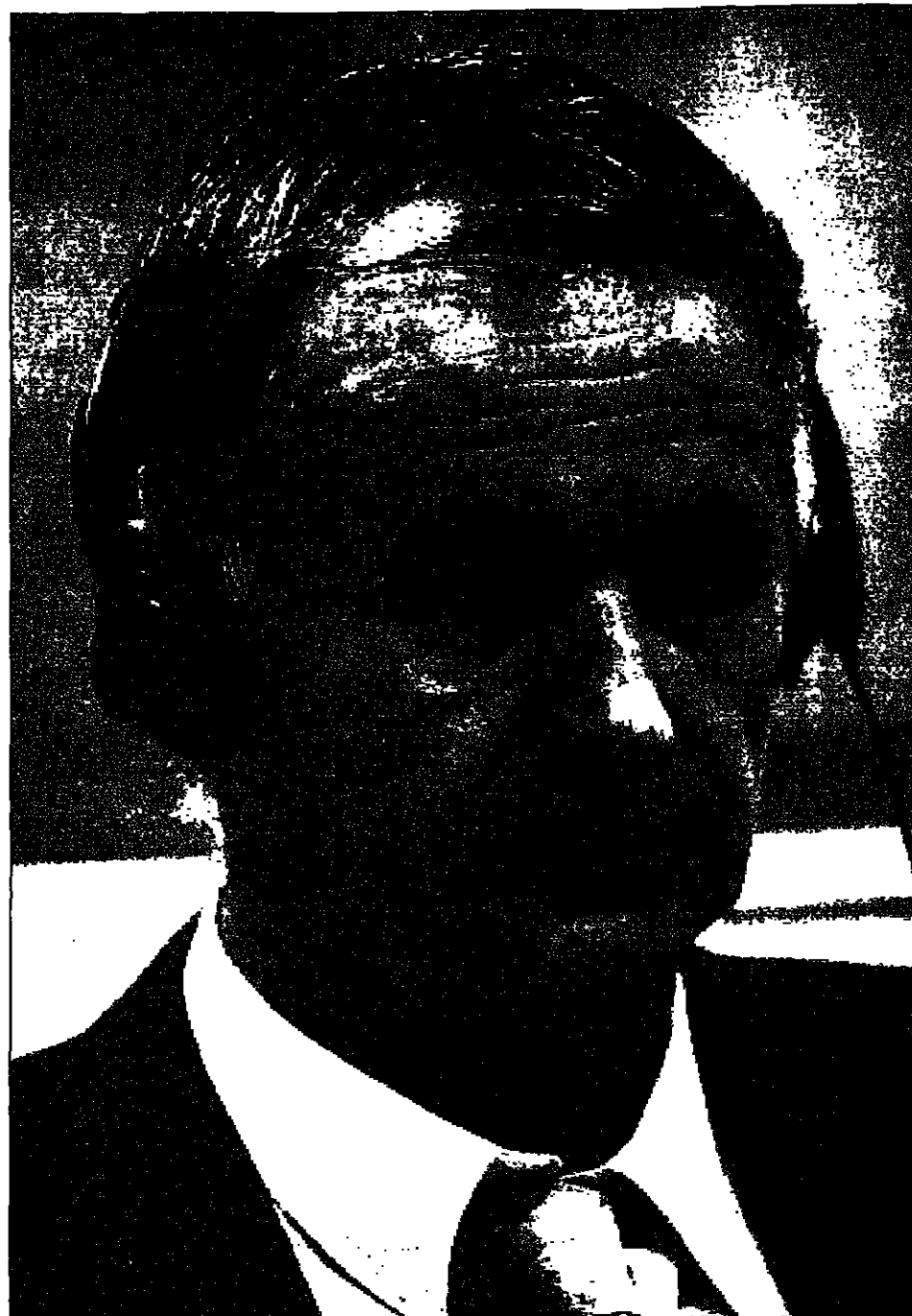
"In 40 years of democracy the traditional parties have never done anything for us. We're voting for Chavez because there is so much corruption here and we want a real change," he said.

Political analysts called the election a sea change after 40 years of democratic rule that has seen two traditional, but now widely discredited, political parties taking turns in power.

For the first time, these two parties, centre-left Democratic Action (AD) and centre-right Copei, presented no candidate.

Both withdrew their nominees in the last week of the campaign and threw their support, and well-oiled political machinery, behind Salas in a bid to beat Chavez.

Despite persistent rumours of possible trouble leading up to the vote, there were no reports of incidents.



Bosnian Serb General Radislav Krstic makes his initial appearance before the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in The Hague. According to the Chief Prosecutor of the U.N. Tribunal Louise Arbour, Krstic was a key player in the 1995 massacre of Muslims who had sought refuge in the U.N. safe area of Srebrenica in eastern Bosnia during the 1992-1995 Bosnia war (Reuters photo)

Bosnian Serb general pleads not guilty to genocide

THE HAGUE (A) — Bosnian Serb General Radislav Krstic pleaded not guilty Monday to charges of genocide and crimes against humanity for his alleged role in the 1995 massacre of Muslims in the U.N.-protected enclave of Srebrenica.

"I plead not guilty," Krstic said before a packed courtroom.

Krstic, a lieutenant-general, is the highest-ranking military officer in the Bosnian Serb army to appear before the U.N. war crimes court. He was arrested by NATO-led troops near Bijeljina Wednesday in an operation that was heavily criticised by Russia.

Remaining seated due to physical problems linked to an amputated leg, the 50-year-old grew slightly irritated as he pleaded not guilty to each of the six counts against him.

He is charged with genocide and complicity to commit genocide as well as three counts of crimes against humanity, for extermination, murder and persecution, and one count of a violation of the laws or customs of war for events that occurred between July 11 and Nov. 1, 1995, following the fall of Srebrenica when thousands of Bosnian Muslim men were executed.

Dressed smartly in a grey-green suit and patterned

pastel tie, Krstic looked calm and attentive as he followed the proceedings.

Prosecutor Brenda Hollis told judges that she intended to call some 50 to 70 witnesses to prove allegations that Krstic was one of the main organisers of the slaughter at Srebrenica, the bloodiest massacre of the 1992-1995 Bosnian war.

The judges meanwhile set a tentative date for the trial's commencement at the beginning of April.

Krstic for his part complained about his conditions of detention, particularly the fact that there was currently no heating in the cells which was having an adverse effect on his leg injury.

Neither Krstic nor his lawyer Nenad Petrusic made any reference to allegation by Bosnian Serb president Nikola Poplasen that Krstic had been beaten up during his arrest.

At the same time of his detention, Krstic held the position of commander of the fifth corps of the Bosnian Serb army (VRS), based in Sokolac in north-eastern Bosnia.

He was secretly indicted by the ICTY on Nov. 2 along with two other Bosnian Serb officers whose names are blacked out and will remain secret until their eventual arrest.

The indictment alleges

that the three men "intended to destroy a part of the Bosnian Muslim people as a national, ethnic or religious group."

"Krstic planned, instigated, ordered or otherwise aided and abetted in the planning, preparation or execution of a planned and organised mass execution of thousands of captured Bosnian Muslims men from the Srebrenica safe area," the document said.

Srebrenica, in eastern Bosnia-Herzegovina, was a Muslim enclave and U.N.-declared "safe-area" until July 11, 1995, when Serb forces rushed aside the lightly armed Dutch-U.N. peacekeepers, overran the zone, then killed thousands of its male inhabitants.

The exact number of dead is not known but international Red Cross figures indicate that more than 7,000 people are still missing. It is the worst case of genocide in Europe since World War II.

The indictment alleges that executions of Muslims were carried out in at least 11 locations. Soldiers at each site, all under Krstic's command, summarily executed Bosnian Muslims in the hundreds using automatic weapons and hand grenades.

Krstic is one of 26 war crimes suspects currently detained by the ICTY.

NEWS IN BRIEF

At least 10 die in two Paris fires

PARIS (R) — Seven people died in a fire at an old people's home near Paris early Monday, firemen said. They said more than 30 people were injured in the blaze which apparently started in a bedroom. Firemen said the death toll was provisional and they were still searching for more possible casualties in the ruins of the home, in the northern suburb of Livry-Gargan. Another blaze in a five-storey apartment block in central Paris took three lives, firemen said. One of the victims fell to her death after jumping out of a window onto a parked car to escape the blaze. Firemen said both fires were brought under control.

Casper the robot fits artificial hips

MUNICH (DPA) — More and more artificial hips seem to be fitted with the aid of a robot developed in Germany. The new computerised operating system, nicknamed Casper, was introduced at Munich University hospital. The director of the hospital's orthopaedic clinic, Professor Hans Juergen Refior, said the robot could mill to a 0.1-millimetre degree of accuracy. "No surgeon can work manually with that level of steadiness and precision," he added. Before the operation, the hip and surrounding tissue are given a CAT scan. The scan data are then fed to the robot. Guided by a surgeon using a type of remote control, Casper then uses the stored data to operate. Refior explained that the new operating method was less troublesome for patients, and required a shorter hospital stay. Weight could be put on the no-cement artificial hip just one day after the operation, he said. Casper, already in use in the accident surgery department at Erlangen hospital, is expected to perform up to 300 operations a year at the Munich university hospital. Refior is planning to extend the use of the robot to knee-joint, crucial ligament and spinal column operations.

Experts hope HIV survivors

will provide key to AIDS vaccine

NEW DELHI (DPA) — Australian research scientists are hoping to find the key to an AIDS vaccine in long-term survivors infected with HIV. Six patients had survived with an unusual type of HIV virus for up to 17 years, medical researcher John Mills told an international immunology conference in New Delhi. Mills, who works at the Macfarlane Burnet Centre for Medical Research in Victoria, Australia, said the patients were carriers of a strain of the AIDS pathogen which did not trigger the disease. This strain contained a mutant version of a gene which normally played a major role in triggering AIDS. It must be shown, however, whether a vaccine could be produced from these mutant viruses, said Ulrich Marcus of Berlin's Robert Koch Institute. It was not yet clear whether the virus was really weakened or whether it simply multiplied more slowly, thus leading to a delay in the onset of the disease. With the familiar strains of HIV, there was an average ten-year delay between infection and outbreak of AIDS. Possibly, this might be extended to 20 years in the case of the newly-discovered virus. Originally, nine HIV-positive patients had been identified as having the mutant strain. According to Mills, all were infected between 1981 and 1984 through blood transfusions from the same donor. In the meantime, three had died of causes unrelated to AIDS. The U.S. journal Science first reported the Victoria institute's work three years ago, when the carriers had been infected for between 12 and 15 years.

Bangladesh police deny top Indian terrorist murdered in Dhaka

DHAKA (DPA) — Bangladesh police have confirmed that the body of a man found beside a railroad track in Dhaka was not the fugitive Indian terrorist Abdul Karim Tunda, press reports said Monday. The influential daily "Ittefaq" quoted senior police officials as saying the body, with an iron wire wrapped around the neck and a chopped off arm, was of a jobless engineer suspected of committing suicide under a running train late Thursday. "Top terrorist Tunda is still hiding in Bangladesh," the newspaper said, quoting an unnamed senior police official in Dhaka. Police gave the dead engineer's name as Shambhu Kumar Saha, aged 28. Earlier, Indian press reports said Tunda was found murdered by a rival underworld faction in Dhaka several months after he had crossed into neighbouring Bangladesh. Tunda is wanted by Indian police for involvement in 32 cases of bombing public places, causing many fatalities. Indian authorities, tipped off Dhaka police on Tunda's illegal entry into Bangladesh in June, official sources said. India also warned Dhaka police that the 40-year-old fugitive could be planning terrorist attacks inside Bangladesh. Indian press reports also claimed that Tunda worked for the Pakistani intelligence.

Vietnamese judge gets five years' jail for taking bribe

HANOI (DPA) — A Vietnamese judge was sentenced to five years in prison for taking a bribe to settle an assault case in favour of the defendants, officials said Monday. Pham Huong, 37, broke down in tears during cross-examination in which he admitted he had sought 6 million dong (\$428) from the families of two defendants. Police arrested Huong just after he accepted \$128 from the mother of one defendant, who came to the judge's house. She had earlier alerted police to the solicitation, which came through a friend of the judge, because she was poor and not able to raise the whole amount demanded. The \$128 were equal to about three months pay for the judge. The sentence was passed Saturday in the south-central province of Nha Trang, where Huong had worked for 10 years. "That he had worked here so long did not decrease his sentence, it made his crime even worse," said Nguyen Van Vien, the judge sentencing Huong. Pham Anh Tuan, the friend who solicited the bribe, was given prison term of 18 months. The two defendants Huong was prepared to intercede for were sentenced to 24 months and 18 months in a subsequent trial for beating up a third youth, local press reports said. While the judicial system is widely regarded as riddled with corruption, prison terms for judges "on the take" have been rare.

U.S. senator proposes 'new conversation' with Cuba

HAVANA (R) — A U.S. senator said Sunday he would urge his government to take steps to ease its policy towards Cuba and establish a "new conversation for the new millennium" between the two countries.

Sen. Christopher Dodd, a Connecticut Democrat and member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, made the announcement in Havana after meeting President Fidel Castro, other senior Cuban officials and representatives of sectors of Cuban society, including the Catholic Church and political dissidents.

"In my view, this is the time to begin a new conversation between the United States and Cuba... a new conversation for the new millennium," Dodd told foreign reporters in a briefing.

He said U.S. policy towards the Communist-ruled Caribbean island over the last four decades had oscillated between periods of "outright hostility" and "raw neglect" and had achieved no concrete positive results.

"This just can't go on, day after day, month after month," he added.

Dodd, who said he would brief President Bill Clinton on his trip to Cuba, proposed five steps that "I would urge the United States to take in the coming months." These would imply a easing of the long-standing U.S. economic embargo against Cuba.

The steps he suggested were to allow U.S. food and medicine sales to the island, to lift restrictions on travel between the two countries and to increase contacts between U.S. and Cuban officials and diplomats to promote "constructive dialogue."

Dodd also proposed increased joint cooperation against terrorism and drug-trafficking and on environmental issues. For his fifth point, he expressed support for the creation of a national commission to review current U.S. policy towards Cuba.

He said the idea of the commission, which is already supported by a group of U.S. Congress members and some senior former administration officials, was to try to "crystallise" the growing debate about U.S. policy towards Cuba.

Dodd said he believed the U.S. and Cuba needed to move away from what he called "the notion of tit-for-tat" in which each side routinely demanded that the other change as a condition for altering current policy.

He said the U.S. government needed to do what was right for its own people. "We do not deny food and medicine to anyone in the world... you don't do that," he said, arguing that the current ban on food and medicine sales to Cuba should end.

He also said he believed most Americans were unhappy about government restrictions on travel by U.S. nationals to Cuba.

Earlier this year, Dodd was the co-sponsor of a bill in the Congress that proposed easing of the embargo to allow sales on humanitarian grounds of U.S. food and medicines to Cuba.

The bill did not pass because of opposition from Cuban-American legislators but it was widely expected to be revived in the next Congress session.

Dodd said he had generally encountered strong support for his proposals from the Cubans, officials and otherwise, he had spoken to during his five-day visit. He had toured a hospital and a market, where he chatted with shoppers and stall holders.

He described his Friday night meeting with Castro, which lasted some six hours, as "very cordial, interesting and positive" but with "no big breakthroughs."

He hoped this would be the first of several visits to Cuba to pursue this dialogue. "I'm a lot more optimistic than I thought I might be," he said.

But he added he was aware that there was opposition from Cuban-American legislators at home to any easing of the current U.S. policy towards Cuba, even for example to the idea of the national commission to review the existing policy.

"I don't think that in the short term the lifting of the (U.S.) embargo (against Cuba) is likely," he said, while insisting only a new approach would break the current deadlock.

N. American glaciers melting — researchers uneasy

SEATTLE (DPA) — North America is thawing out and scientists now believe that this is one of the clearest signs for changes in global climate.

Worldwide, more and more people endure far hotter summer weather and record temperatures. But the well-documented melting of glaciers in Canada and the northern U.S. is according to expert opinion a still much clearer pointer on global warming. Even many glaciers in Austria and Switzerland have shrunk in the last few years.

With more than 1,000 glaciers Alaska is one of the most ice-rich areas

of the world. Regional scientists such as climatologist Gunter Weller and forestry specialist Glenn Juday of the University of Alaska see the climate changes on their own doorstep with serious concern.

Along the comparison of photos from the last decades clearly shows how quickly the ice masses are receding. The gigantic Columbia Glacier for example which enters the sea in the north Pacific coast of Alaska has shrunk by about 13 kilometres in the last 16 years.

But also the Athabasca Glacier in the Columbia Icefield on the western

Canadian Rocky Mountains lost since the 1970s at over 50 million cubic metres of mass, reported the researcher Eric Mattson from the Nipissing University, which has been observing the glacier for years.

And immediately south of the Canadian border, in the Glacier National Park, Montana, researchers are looking at the influence of general warming on the ice that has given the well-known tourist attraction its name.

The glaciers there could completely disappear within the next 50 to 70 years, warned

geologist Mark Meier at a conference in Boston.

The glacier regions have warmed dramatically quicker than the rest of the planet. World-wide scientists have measured an average warming of less than one degree Celsius in the past 100 years.

In the northern most regions though according to the University of Alaska are up to three degrees. And above all the winter months are getting warmer and warmer.

Researchers such as the climatologist Weller have the following explanation for the increased warming effect in the cold regions: when ice and

snow melt the region absorbs the heat yet stronger, instead of reflecting it. And that increases the global trend.

Forestry expert Glenn Juday told the Anchorage Daily News that the catastrophic consequences of warming for Alaska's forests. "We've got a sick forest here," said Juday.

To back this up he points to a lack of rainfall in summer and snowfalls in winter which makes it difficult for vegetation to grow in the area around the Columbia Glacier.

The rising temperatures allow parasites — destructive beetles and worms — to survive

and destroy whole forests in just a few years. The water of the nearby glacier cannot reduce the dryness in the wooded areas because the ice melts directly into the sea.

The inland glaciers of the Rocky Mountains on the other hand supply cities like Calgary and Edmonton with water in the dry western Canadian prairie — at the moment.

If the ancient ice in the Columbia Icefields continues to melt at a record rate, the next hundred years may see equally disastrous water shortages as are now occurring in Alaska's glacier regions.



An East Timorese student is dragged away by security personnel during a protest at the United States embassy in Jakarta. About 100 East Timorese students took part in the protest demanding Indonesian troops quit the territory and that former President Suharto be tried in an international court for human rights abuses. The protesters rallied to mark the anniversary of East Timor's invasion by Indonesian troops 23 years ago (Reuters photo)

East Timorese mark 23rd anniversary of Indonesian invasion

JAKARTA (DPA) — A group of East Timorese students demonstrated outside the United Nations office in Jakarta Monday to mark the 23rd anniversary of Indonesia's invasion of their homeland.

More than 100 East Timorese students, joined by youths from the East Timor Solidarity Group, carried banners and shouted slogans calling for an "immediate withdrawal of Indonesian troops" from the troubled former Portuguese colony.

The protesters also demanded an immediate referendum on independence for East Timor.

A prepared statement issued by the students claimed that 23 years since the invasion the atmosphere remained the same there, with Indonesian

occupation troops engaging in tactics of terror, intimidation, disappearance and a variety of other human rights violations.

"The East Timor people are still suffering, dying in loneliness," said the statement.

The students called on the international community to put pressure on the Indonesian government to accept an "immediate, free and fair referendum in East Timor under U.N. supervision, as a way for the East Timorese people to freely determine their own political future and destiny."

The protesters' statement said it was time for the international community, particularly the governments who have proclaimed themselves as protectors and promoters of

human rights, "but have economic complicity in their relations with Indonesia," to put an end of their hypocrisy.

On Dec. 7, 1975, Indonesian troops invaded East Timor, after Portugal ended its colonial rule there. According to human rights organisations, more than 200,000 people — one third of East Timor's population — have been killed in armed clashes or of starvation and illnesses since the invasion.

Jakarta annexed the territory several months after the invasion, a move the United Nations and most Western countries do not recognise. They regard Portugal as East Timor's rightful administrative power.

Meanwhile, military authorities in East Timor

have announced plans to arm villagers in the province to fight East Timor separatist rebels.

The official Antara news agency quoted Colonel Tono Suratman, chief of the East Timor military district, as saying he had an "order from my superior to arm villagers so that they can secure their villages."

Suratman said his office would evaluate which villages would receive weapons and training, but added that only villages "prone" to attacks by separatists would be armed.

The Indonesian government recently blamed East Timorese rebels for stepping up their attacks and announced it will resume counter-insurgency measures in the troubled province.

N. Korea rattles sabre as U.S. envoy begins tour

SEOUL (R) — North Korea said Monday it was girding for war with the United States as U.S. President Bill Clinton's policy coordinator on North Korea began talks in Seoul about a suspected nuclear complex in the North.

In a party newspaper commentary carried by the North's official Korean Central News Agency Monday, Pyongyang again sounded the drums of war in its dispute with Washington about access to a vast underground complex it is building.

"Since it has become clear that the U.S. imperialists have planned to wage an overall war with (North Korea) and the ignition of war is imminent, our revolutionary armed forces cannot but take an appropriate self-defensive counter-measure," said the commentary in the ruling Workers' Party newspaper.

"We cannot remain a passive onlooker to the hysterical moves of the enemies, as they are trying to cut off our heart and reduce our territory to ashes with nuclear weapons, alleging they would make 'pre-emptive strike' and 'surgical operation style strike'," the

commentary said.

Some analysts in South Korea have speculated that Washington may consider a "surgical" air strike against the complex, if it is conclusively proven to be a nuclear-related facility.

U.S. diplomats have declined to say whether that is being considered.

North Korea insists the project is for civilian use, but has not given any other details.

North Korea has been devastated by floods and drought since 1995, leaving the once fiercely self-country dependent on international handouts. A U.S. congressional team estimated after a recent visit that 300,000 people had died from hunger in each of the past three years.

U.S. Policy Coordinator on North Korea William Perry was holding meetings Monday with South Korea President Kim Dae-jung and his senior security officials.

The former defence secretary, who arrived late Sunday, will fly to Beijing and Tokyo this week to meet top security and defence officials, as well as academic experts, to collect their views on U.S. policy

towards North Korea.

South Korea Foreign Minister Hong Sun-young told Perry at a lunch meeting he thought it was a particularly good idea to go to Beijing.

Beijing has been Pyongyang's most steadfast friend ever since Chinese soldiers fought with North Korea against the U.S.-led United Nations forces in the 1950-53 Korean war.

The conflict ended in a now fraying truce that has left the two Koreas in a technical state of war.

"I think no country has greater influence over the North than China has," Perry said in brief remarks before the media at the start of the lunch. "China has as much potential to influence North Korea as any country has."

"They also have... the ability to understand and explain the mind of the North Korean leadership, which is very important."

Perry's visit comes as Washington's attempts to inspect the suspected site show little progress and concerns grow that Pyongyang could be preparing a new ballistic missile test.

The New York Times said

Sunday that senior U.S. officials were threatening to end a nuclear framework agreement with North Korea if Pyongyang did not allow the inspections.

It said intelligence information on the site was "very convincing" and U.S. officials planned to tell North Korea the agreement would collapse unless they were given access.

In the 1994 pact, known as the Agreed Framework, North Korea promised to freeze its nuclear weapons programme in exchange for billions of dollars of energy assistance, including two light-water nuclear reactors.

The United States and North Korea were to resume talks in Washington Monday over U.S. demands to inspect the site in Kumchang-Ri, near a moth-balled Soviet-era reactor in Yongbyon. A first round of talks was held in New York Friday and Saturday.

Last month, U.S. envoy Charles Kartman visited North Korea but failed to persuade it to allow inspections. He rejected the North's demand for \$300 million in "reparations" to visit the site.

Three Nigerian parties emerge in democracy drive

LAGOS (R) — Three Nigerian parties emerged from weekend local council elections as the leading lights in a drive by the military regime to restore democracy next year.

Six other parties appeared unlikely to win registration from parliamentary and presidential elections before military ruler General Abdulsalam Abubakar steps down next May.

The centrist people's Democratic Party, led by veteran politicians who took a stand against late dictator Sani Abacha, won more than 58 per cent of local councils based on partial results from 31 of Nigeria's 36 states.

In second place, with

about 25 per cent, was the rightist All Peoples Party (APP) and behind it the southwest-based Alliance for Democracy, positioned to the left of centre.

The first three parties qualify automatically, but those that fall behind need to win five per cent of the vote in two thirds of the states or lose their right to contest.

Turnout was generally high for the elections, which marked power it has held for all but 10 years since independence from Britain in 1960.

The vote passed peacefully in most of the country of at least 108 million people from more than 250 ethnic groups, but up to 10 dead were reported in two clash-

es in the oil-producing Niger Delta.

"Democracy is here to stay and it will stay," Abubakar told visiting U.S. Commerce Secretary William Daley, the most senior U.S. representative to come to Nigeria since the army annulled elections in 1993 that were regarded as free and fair.

Nigeria has rapidly opened up to the world since Abacha's sudden death last June as he was poised to stand as the sole candidate in rigged elections.

Abubakar, 56, a soft-spoken career officer from the Muslim north, has freed dozens of detainees and vowed to leave office.

Nigeria's last military

ruler to give up power to an elected government, southern Christian General Olusegun Obasanjo, 61, is now among front runners for next year's presidential elections on the platform of the PDP party.

Obasanjo moved quickly to smoothen feelings among his rivals that the defeat of the PDP in his southwestern home region could be used to discourage him from continuing his drive for the presidency he quit in 1979.

"I am encouraged more than ever before by the local government elections to preserve on the path of seeking the mandate of our people and to serve Nigeria as the next elected president," he said in a statement.

Shuttle assembly crew perform mid-space grab

HOUSTON (R) — The U.S. shuttle Endeavour's robot arm snatched the Russian power station Zarya from its orbit Sunday in preparation for docking and the start of assembly work on the \$60 billion, 16-nation international space station.

"We have Zarya firmly attached to the orbiter and we're half-way home for the day," said shuttle commander Robert Cabana.

Mission specialist Nancyurie was to use the 50-foot robot arm to position Zarya within a few inches of the U.S.-built Unity module, already upright and rising above the shuttle's docking bay.

Endeavour's thrusters would then force the space station modules to gently collide and their docking mechanisms should grab hold of each other at about 0130 GMT Monday.

Cabana took manual control of Endeavour about half a mile from Zarya and began to inch the shuttle towards its goal in a series of manoeuvring thrusts and brakes.

"We've got a tally-ho on Zarya," Cabana called out to Mission Control in Houston after sighting the satellite. "It's a real bright star out there."

Endeavour, carrying unity in

its payload bay, had chased Zarya, an unmanned space station component, for two days. Zarya was sent aloft from the Baikonour Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan last month.

Endeavour's crew will enter the Unity-Zarya complex Thursday after spacewalking astronauts complete power couplings between the two modules. They will be the first occupants of a space station that eventually will spread over most of an acre and become one of the brightest objects in the night sky.

Russian ground controllers in Koryolev set the 22-tonne Zarya adrift shortly before the grapple to ensure that control thrusters did not fire automatically and cause a catastrophic accident with the shuttle.

The docking will occur as the three spacecraft pass over Russian ground stations so they can monitor systems on Zarya that will supply power and navigational control during the early stages of space station construction.

Unity is a honeycomb of hatches and docking ports that will link a half-dozen science, service and living modules together. It also has a docking port for future shuttle missions.

The newly formed complex will be as tall as a seven-storey building and weigh more than 40 tonnes as it zips along at about 8 kilometres per second.

The docking will be the most complex ever attempted by U.S. astronauts. Zarya is far bigger than the largest satellite yet manipulated by a shuttle's robot arm.

Further complicating matters, the Unity module rising above the shuttle's docking bay will block Endeavour's view of Zarya as Curie uses the robot arm to position Zarya above Unity. Video cameras mounted on the arm itself will provide her primary line of sight.

"For the first time, when we're trying to grapple a free-flying payload or dock with a free-flying payload, we don't have visual contact with it out the window," Curie, who commanded helicopter squadrons in the U.S. Army before becoming an astronaut, said in a pre-flight interview.

Saturday, astronauts worked three hours to remove the Unity module from Endeavour's cargo bay to lock it onto the shuttle's docking port.

The start of the Zarya rendezvous was delayed when Cabana fired Endeavour's jets

early Sunday to move it away from the path of space debris left from the Nov. 6 launch of a Delta II rocket from Vandenberg Air Force Base in California.

Endeavour would have missed the debris by 2.5 kilometres, but Flight Director John Shannon in Houston decided to put the shuttle well out of harm's way, NASA spokesman James Hartsfield.

The Endeavour crew trained for two years for this mission, delayed by a year as the cash-strapped Russian space programme struggled to complete a third station component, a command module with living space for rotating crews of three.

When that piece is added, the space station will become functional.

When finished, the 110-metre orbiting outpost will be the most expensive scientific undertaking ever, with a life expectancy of between 10 and 15 years.

The station is to be an orbiting laboratory for studies into everything from cell division to the theorised existence of an anti-matter universe. NASA hopes research into the long-term effects of space flight will pave the way to the way to manned Mars missions.

Suharto's son named as illegal landswap suspect

JAKARTA (DPA) — The Indonesian attorney general's office has formally named former president Suharto's youngest son as a suspect in an illegal land swap that cost the state more than \$7 million, reports said Monday.

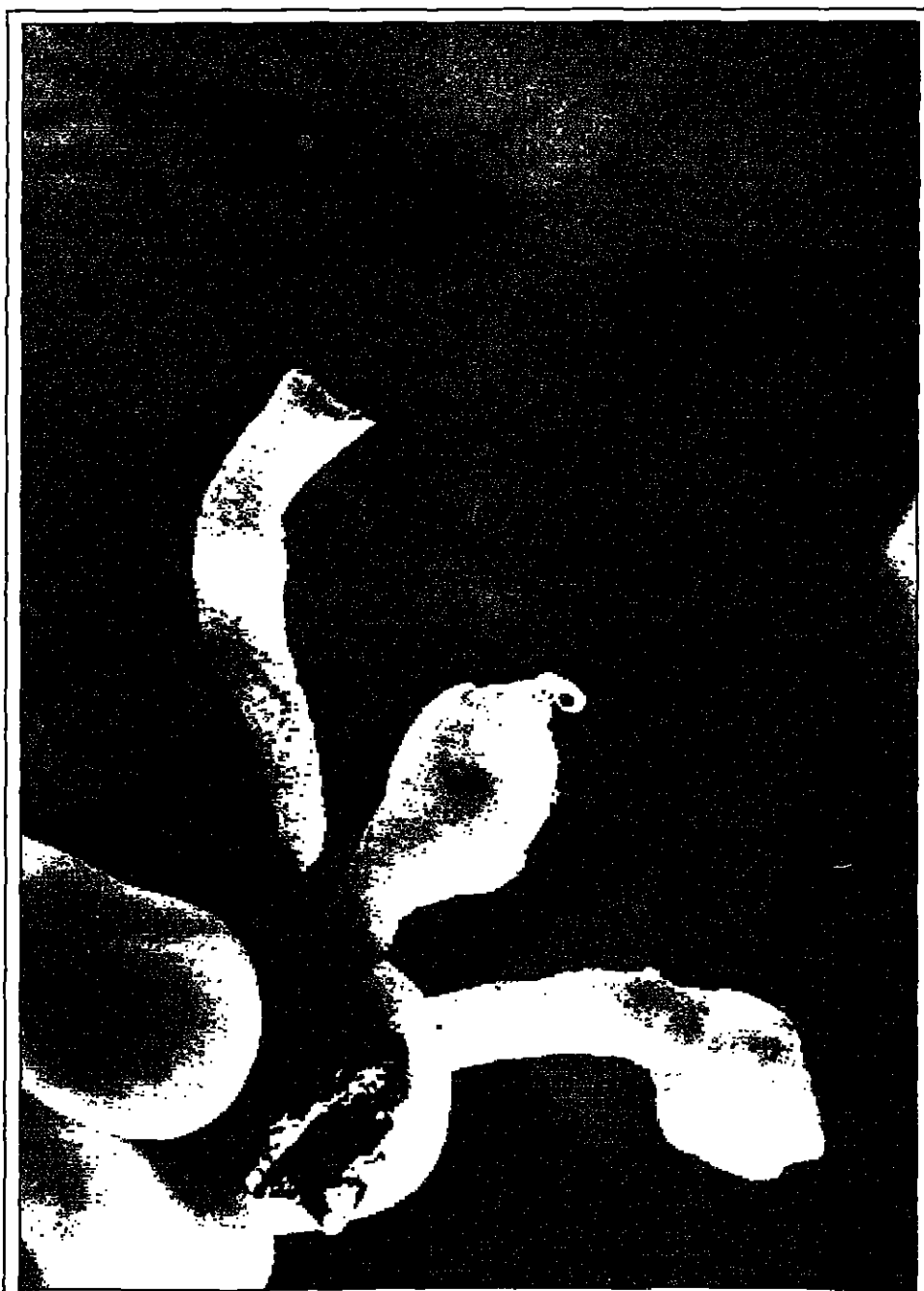
Deputy Attorney General for special crimes Anton Sujata said two other men, Ricardo Gelael and former chief of the logistics board Beddu Amang were also named as suspects in similar cases, the Repubblica daily reported.

Sujata said in order to pave the way for the investigation process, the three suspects had been barred from leaving the country.

Suharto's son Hutomo "Tommy" Mandalaputra was recently questioned at the attorney general's office as a witness to the illegal land swap case in north Jakarta.

It was reported earlier that Tommy, in his capacity as owner of PT Goro Batara Sakri, illegally swapped 23 hectares of government-owned land in Kelapa Gading in North Jakarta, which may have cost the state a loss of \$7 million.

Sutoyo did not reveal when Tommy's case would be brought to the court, but he was the first of Suharto's offspring to face imprisonment since the 77-year-old former leader was forced to resign in May amid riots and economic collapse.



Auckland Institute of Technology marine biologist John Buckridge holds a newly-discovered Neolepas stalked barnacle. The discovery of the barnacle in two active underwater volcanoes near New Zealand's Bay of Plenty has sparked a feud between New Zealand scientists and their Canadian counterparts. The Canadians have asked Buckridge's team to hand over the barnacle for their examination as experts in volcanic life form. Scientists said the barnacle species dates from prehistoric times and is related to a barnacle from the Jurassic period (Reuters photo)

Greenpeace activists board Japanese whalers

SYDNEY (R) — Greenpeace activists chained themselves to two Japanese whaling ships Monday, preventing the vessels from leaving the South Pacific port of Noumea in New Caledonia.

The environmental group said four activists boarded the Kyo Maru No. 1 and the whaling factory ship Nisshin Maru shortly before dawn and hung a "Stop Killing Whales" banner.

They then chained themselves to anchor chains and harpoon mooring lines. Greenpeace divers also chained up the pro-peller of the Kyo Maru.

"Whales need a global sanctuary, not hunting," Greenpeace

campaigner Cristina Mormoruni told Reuters from Noumea.

"Since 1994, Japan has consistently ignored the internationally recognised southern Ocean Whale Sanctuary and continued to hunt whales in this protected area to supply their market with whale meat," Mormoruni said.

"This outrageous practice must be abandoned immediately."

No arrests have been made and Greenpeace said its activists planned to stay on the Japanese ships as long as possible.

"My understanding is that the French authorities are observing the situation and waiting until

the Japanese ask them to remove the people," Mormoruni said.

Japan's whaling in the Southern Ocean was disrupted last month when five extensively damaged the 7,575-tonne factory ship Nisshin Maru, which is expected to return to Japan and undergo comprehensive repair work in December.

The vessel, mother ship for Japan's five-vessel whaling fleet, was towed to New Caledonia for emergency repairs after catching fire on Nov. 19 off the east coast of Australia.

The Japan Fisheries Agency has said the factory ship would

resume whaling in January or February, but added it may be forced to scale down its "scientific research whaling."

The Japanese fleet, including three "catcher" vessels and a "sighter" vessel, left southern Japan on November 7.

Japan started "scientific research" whaling in 1987 after a commercial moratorium on whaling, but Greenpeace says it is not purely scientific and that meat from last year's expedition fetched some \$50 million on the open market in Japan.

Last April, the fleet returned with 438 minke whales, representing an estimated 1,700 tonnes of meat.

—The Guardian

workers hired by the association say the structure is in nature. Residents claim a resort or convention could permanently change the pattern of this small farming community. Conservationists, meanwhile — recently tagged

The bomber that got away: When justice is not pursued

By Robert Fisk

INSIDE HER tiny room, with its arched brick roof just off the stone corridor of the women's Category "A" prison in Durham, Samar Alami has already had two years to ponder the extraordinary events that took her from her wealthy Knightsbridge home to share her life with Myra Hindley and Rosemary West. Palestine seems a very long way away — even when Samar Alami hands her visitors a small cup of scalding, Arabic coffee — and the more she tells her story, the more you realise how difficult it must have been for an English jury to believe in her innocence.

On December 16, 1996, Samar Alami and her friend, Jawad Botmi, both proclaiming their innocence, were convicted of conspiring to bomb the Israeli embassy and the headquarters of the Zionist federation in London in 1994. "The evil pair," one paper called them. When Alami named the man she believed had entrapped them — Reda Moghrabi, whom she now suspected was an Israeli agent — the authorities largely ignored her revelation. Which is perverse, to say the least, because the police admit they never found the actual bomber. And Moghrabi is the name the bomber used.

At 32, Samar Alami is a slight, energetic Lebanese-Palestinian with a BSc in chemical engineering from University College, London, and an MSc from Imperial College; an intelligent, thoughtful, political woman who was a member of various British Palestinian groups, as well as a supporter — she never concealed this — of the Damascus-based Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. Jawad Botmi is 30, came from Battir in the occupied West Bank, and holds a BSc in electrical engineering from Leicester University. An attempt to run his own security alarm company had failed by January 1995, and he was reduced to earning pin-money in Britain by acting as a middle-man at car auctions. Frustration at the plight of Palestinian refugees, anger at the unfair nature of the Oslo "peace" accord, and guilt that they had no part in the "resistance" to Israeli rule in the West Bank, brought the two together.

Carefully, Alami tells visitors of her life before the trial: how she had kept two guns in a family apartment in Knightsbridge for a Palestinian friend who feared assassination when he was in London; how she tried to work out the chemistry of bombs which could be improvised for use against Israeli military targets in the occupied territories; how she experimented with Botmi to see if model aircraft

could carry explosives over the Lebanese-Israeli border; how she had been photographed at a London synagogue during a visit by Shimon Peres (she said she took an interest in Jewish affairs); and of how she took up Reda Moghrabi's offer of free explosives (for experiments with the model aircraft, she claims) a few days before the Israeli embassy was bombed in 1994.

"I guess I was a bit naïve," she told me just before her trial. "I never felt threatened by Reda Moghrabi. I didn't take nearly enough precautions." And listening to her, I could see how the 12-strong jury would shake their heads in disbelief. She was convicted by a majority of 11 to one, and I wasn't surprised. Gareth Peirce, her solicitor, was not going to score any points when the defence tried to explain to the jury the history of Palestine — even though Peirce brought along a shoal of testaments for Samar Alami, including one from a former Tory minister, Lord Gilmour.

But the trial was, to put it mildly, a very puzzling affair. Even before it began, the case developed unusually. First of all, the police charged Nadia Zekra, a very middle-class Palestinian lady, with planting the bomb outside the embassy. Explosive traces had supposedly been found on a table in her home. Then, once the trial began, all charges against Zekra were dropped. Another Palestinian, Mahmoud Abu Wardah, was charged, but the jury acquitted him on all charges. And in the pre-trial period, the judge allowed both Alami and Botmi to go free on bail — indeed, I first met both of them when they turned up to a lecture I gave at the Royal Geographical Society in London during their hearing. Why, I asked myself then, would the court allow two supposedly dangerous "terrorists," alleged to have blown up an embassy, to wander the streets of London?

The claim of responsibility for the Israeli embassy bombing was itself very curious. It was sent to two Arab newspapers in London and claimed to be from the "Jaffa team" of the "Palestinian Resistance." No such group has ever been heard of before, or since, and the wording of the Arabic-language document lacked the clarity of nearly all other similar claims. A week earlier, a massive bomb had destroyed the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires — yet the London bombings killed no one, an extraordinary miracle that had most Middle East militants wondering what sort of organisation could have proved so ineffective. Every Palestinian opposition group or Muslim organisation in Lebanon opposed to the so-called "peace process" has either denied to The Inde-

pendent any role in the explosions, or expressed ignorance of it.

Then came the trial itself. Gareth Peirce, Alami's solicitor — the lady who broke the prosecution's case in the Guildford Four trial — agrees that the judge, Mr. Justice Garland, generally behaved with great fairness towards her client. But there were some unhappy pros-

'The jury obviously concluded that Reda Moghrabi was a fictitious character. But... since even Scotland Yard agree that the convicted pair did not carry out the bombing — that there was someone else who actually planted the bomb — you might expect the police to show a little more interest'

ecution slips in the trial. A drawing of London streets allegedly showing the location of the Israeli embassy — target of the July 1994 bombings — was proved to be a street map of Sidon where one of Alami's relatives lived. There was confusion about an aerial found in Mr. Abu Wardah's possession which was originally said to be part of Botmi's aircraft project, but was in fact part of a security alarm.

Then two members of the jury complained to Mr. Justice Garland that a reporter in the court had tried to contact them during the trial proceedings. One of the jurors stated that the reporter "said words to the effect: 'I've got a telephone number if you want it.'" The reporter — subsequently identified by The

Independent as a journalist for Israeli radio, and who denied any attempt to "noble" the jury — was interviewed by the police but allowed to remain in court during the trial.

Gareth Peirce tried to obtain the film from the Israeli embassy security videotape camera that must have shown the bomber — only to be told that the security camera was not working on the day of the bombing. Both the accused could prove that they were not at the scene of the bombing — Alami had been making a telephone call from the Imperial College library at the time, had forgotten where she was when the bomb exploded (as she might well have done if innocent), and was only able to prove her alibi when her solicitor found that the telephone in the library recorded the time and number of calls.

But once Alami and Botmi decided to name Moghrabi — having apparently begun to realise the degree to which they had been "set up" — the authorities took little interest in the revelation. She was not asked to provide a portrait of the man who may well — if she was telling the truth — have been behind the bombings. "There is no independent evidence of his existence, and we never had an address, telephone number, no business reference, no bank account, no credit card reference..."

Mr. Justice Garland remarked: "Well now, is he real? Is his name a label for someone else, or is he a fictitious character carefully tailored to fit those parts of the Crown's case to which there is no answer?" As far as the couple were concerned, the judge might have added: "he could have been a Mossad agent, a police informer, or goodness knows what, for all they knew."

The name Moghrabi can be Arabic or Jewish, Lebanese or Palestinian — most Moghrabis in the Middle East would trace their ancestry to the 16th-century Spanish expulsion of Jews and Arabs to the Maghreb of North Africa. Moghrabi may be a name as false as the intentions of the man in whom Alami and Botmi placed their trust in 1992.

But since Alami and Botmi put together their portrait of Moghrabi separately from each other — in two different prisons where they were being held — and since the two faces are similar, he almost certainly did exist. And from their memory of his words, it is also possible to reconstruct his story. Agents, after all, are always encouraged to build their identities around events that really happened, because it is easier to stick to a biography if some of it is actually true.

Born in the West Bank around 1950, and to parents who had abandoned their home on the

coast during the 1948 flight of Palestinians from what became Israel, Moghrabi grew in Nablus or Ramallah. Arrested by the Israelis for "resistance activities" in 1978 or 1979, he moved to Jordan where he taught at the Baqaa refugee camp.

In early June 1982, Moghrabi fought Israeli invasion forces on the Lebanese coast road south of Sidon. Falling out with both Yasser Arafat's PLO and Arafat's opponents in Damascus, he left Lebanon via Syria and Cyprus for Britain where — through refugee status or marriage to an Englishwoman — he went into business with Gulf contacts. In the mid-Eighties, he moved to Kuwait but then fled when Iraq invaded in 1990, returning to Britain to live in Birmingham.

Alami met Moghrabi for the first time in the spring of 1992, after they both attended a London lecture on the Middle East. Moghrabi began discussing "resistance problems" with Alami and Botmi in 1993, recalling his experience in Lebanon. "Moghrabi was coming across as someone informative, critical, interesting, and experienced," Alami was to recall. By March of 1994, they were talking about the techniques of bomb-making. Moghrabi seemed "knowledgeable." In June 1994, Moghrabi used Botmi's help in buying a second-hand Audi car — which was to seal Botmi's fate. A few days later, Alami and Moghrabi met for the last time.

"He had phoned me... saying he was leaving Britain and he might leave a few things for me," Alami recalled. "He said that he had been doing experiments, that he had products (sic) he no longer needed... and thought of giving them to me." Moghrabi gave Alami explosives, boot-to-boot from his car to hers in central London. "I wasn't sure how to react but somehow couldn't say no," she says. Just after midday on July 26, 1994, the Audi car blew up outside the Israeli embassy in London. That night, another bomb exploded outside Balfour house in Finchley. Alami and Botmi were convicted of conspiracy — though not the actual bombing — in December.

The jury obviously concluded that Reda Moghrabi was a fictitious character. But if so, Alami and Botmi have produced a mighty convincing portrait of the "Man Who Never Was." And since even Scotland Yard agree that the convicted pair did not carry out the bombing — that there was someone else who actually planted the bomb — you might expect the police to show a little more interest in the man with the staring eyes.

— The Independent

Environment

U.S. mega-mansion angers super-rich, conservationists

By Malene Jensen
Agence France Presse

WHAT MAY become America's biggest private home — with 29 bedrooms, 39 bathrooms and a bowling alley — is slowly rising on a potato field here despite the furious opposition of rich neighbours and conservationists.

The 25-hectare compound that overlooks the Atlantic Ocean is located in the Hamptons, playground to the rich, on the south-eastern tip of New York's Long Island. Sprawling alongside farms, open fields and single-family homes, the palace will dwarf the White House and even the mansion of computer mogul Bill Gates.

The owner, Ira Rennert, 63, is a secretive multi-millionaire who has companies all across the country.

Rennert is also an enthusiastic Zionist and a strong financial backer of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Rennert insists that the colossal 10,000-square-metre limestone villa complex, equipped with a furnace larger than the one used at the local high school, will be a residence for just himself, his wife and their three adult children.

That has Rennert's neighbours steaming. They have collected some \$70,000 to try to stop what they claim is a commercial complex.

"This is not a single family structure," said Tom Shea, lawyer for the local homeowners' association, which is appealing the decision to grant Rennert a building permit with the zoning board.

"If he gets away with this, anybody can come in with a crazy commercial complex plan and say, 'It's my single family house'," said Shea. He compared Rennert's application to seeking permission to build a car wash by saying that you plan to live in it.

Engineers hired by the homeowners' association say the structure is commercial in nature. Residents claim that it will be a resort or convention centre that will permanently change the pastoral make-up of this small farming community.

Conservationists, meanwhile, say that Rennert — recently tagged in the U.S.

media as the country's number one private polluter — was able to skirt around an environmental impact study by calling it his home.

"There is no analysis of what this is going to do to the neighbours and the shoreline," said Bob DeLuca, president of the South Fork Conservation Organisation, who was among hundreds of local residents attending a heated hearing on the Rennert home Thursday at Southampton's town hall.

DeLuca cited concern for the water supply, noting that some 30 bathrooms, a commercial-sized laundry facility and sprinklers for manicured lawns would take its toll.

"Some homes already have saltwater intrusion," said Barbara French, 86, who bought a three-bedroom house here overlooking open fields 42 years ago.

"It's just a monstrosity," French said. "It's out of scale to the whole neighbourhood."

The construction is in full swing, as evidenced by a small fleet of bulldozers, trailers and a red crane on the property.

Meanwhile, three of Rennert's lawyers came to Thursday's meeting to insist that the house is indeed a one family home.

Rennert has not attended any of the three hearings and refuses to speak to the media, though he did write a five-line note to the Southampton press reiterating that

the colossal complex is a family residence. Anthony Tohl, one of the Rennert lawyers, brushed aside homeowner criticism as "anti-Semitism." Residents however are offended by the charges.

"This is not an issue about ethnicity but of zoning," said Sheila Bialek, a neighbour who is herself Jewish and lost family members in the Holocaust.

Tohl counters that Rennert "is going to continue to build, and generations of Rennerts will enjoy living in that house."

The fight over the mega-mansion, however, is far from over.

"People go to war to protect a way of life," said one resident at the meeting, whose dream house is overlooking Rennert's lot.

THE SMALLER of Tegucigalpa's two rivers, the appropriately named Rio Chiquito (little river), describes a tight S-bend around one what must be one of the world's least secure prisons, Honduras's Penitenciaría Central. Just across what is normally a muddy trickle of a stream is the house I once lived in: 403 Segunda Calle.

One Saturday morning a few weeks ago a flurry of shots alerted the neighbours to the latest escape bid by the prisoners on the opposite bank. "It was like the Wild West over there," said Myrna Aguiluz, widow of the man from whom I used to rent a rooftop flat.

One prisoner was killed, but for Myrna and her neighbours the jailbreak was the least of their worries.

Not since Hurricane Fifi in 1974 had the Rio Chiquito — whose

worst offence normally was an unappealing odour and an occasional floating dead dog — looked so menacing. Fifi was a garden party compared to Mitch. But no one had any idea how bad it was going to get.

Myrna's daughter Ofelia Maria, who works in the British embassy, left with some suitcases, to be on the safe side. Myrna went to the supermarket, leaving her other daughter, journalist Myrna Maria, on her own in the house.

Upstream a dam, formed by rocks and trees swept down in the flood, suddenly burst. A huge wave rushed down the Rio Chiquito, and in seconds number 403 was several feet deep in churning, muddy water. So powerful was the current that the heavy wooden door was torn from its hinges. Struggling to

escape from the flood, Myrna Maria was swept off her feet as she left the house. Only the quick wits of some young men across the street saved her from drowning.

The street I saw was almost unrecognisable. Thick, brown mud reached halfway up the ground-floor windows. Energetic digging had uncovered one side of a buried red car. Drains had backed up, the smell of raw sewage wafted from open doorways.

A few days later I found Myrna outside her front door among a cluster of domestic appliances salvaged from the ruins of her kitchen. She gave me a tour of the mud-stained ground floor. In one bedroom a filing cabinet drawer stood alone in the middle of the floor. "This is what hurts most," she said.

It was Myrna Maria's poems. "We'd been thinking of having them published," she said. Maybe they could be salvaged; she was not sure. The living room was full of smashed furniture. Mud-soaked clothes hung from the curtain rail. Miraculously the Christmas tree, decorated early in fulfilment of a New Year's resolution, was virtually unscathed.

The government has promised to declare these riverside properties uninhabitable. There has been no talk of compensation. "This is all we have," said Myrna. "I don't know what we'll do. But I still think God has been good to us. He saved the lives of my children. We have to have faith."

— Deutsche Presse Agentur

World Bank water mapping plan aims to aid farmers

By Patrick Connoles
Reuters

A WORLD Bank affiliate unveiled a computerised-mapping system of the Earth's water resources last week with hopes it will help farmers in poor nations gauge when and where to plant crops.

The World Bank's Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) said its "world water and climate atlas" offers enhanced detail on temperature, precipitation and other factors affecting agricultural planning.

The programme is funded by World Bank nations, led by the United States and Japan. The World Bank provides loans and

technical assistance for economic development projects.

Ismael Serageldin, CGIAR chairman and a World Bank vice president, said the programme depends on participating nations transferring agriculture information to the programme, letting farmers zero in on their region and extract key water and climate data visually.

CGIAR said about 80 per cent of all water used each year goes to agriculture, and demand for water in farming is increasing, squeezing limited supplies.

"As surface water is fully utilised in the semi-arid regions of Asia, the Middle East and Africa, including

bread baskets of the world, the groundwater table is falling at an alarming rate," CGIAR said in a statement.

The mapping system would be able to help alleviate the problem of wasted irrigation, since historical precipitation and weather trends would allow planting cycles to change to better use scarce supplies.

The World Bank said development experts believe water scarcity, not shortage of land, is likely to be the main constraint to agricultural production in developing countries.

More than one billion people live in dry regions. The World Bank said it is feared that by 2025 these areas won't have enough water to maintain 1990 per capita food output.



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GCC summit explores joint ventures to ease impact of low oil prices

ABU DHABI (Agencies) — Gulf Arab leaders meeting in Abu Dhabi on Monday plan to debate proposals for regional joint venture projects to help ease the impact of low oil prices on their economies, officials and financial analysts said.

"The principle will be on the table for discussion as part of the economic agenda," a Gulf-based analyst said.

"Joint diversification would be a major order of business at the summit."

"They will discuss setting up joint firms in member states where feasibility permits," he told Reuters.

A senior Gulf official said petrochemicals, mining and financial services were on a list of proposed joint ventures between the Gulf Cooperation Council states — Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Qatar and Bahrain.

The six leaders were due to open their summit on Monday night in the UAE capital.

The analysts said the three-day summit was being held amid worries of economic hardships seen to be threatening decades of prosperity enjoyed by the six oil-rich Arab states.

The GCC states — which control

nearly half of the world's proven oil reserves — rely on returns from crude exports for about three-quarters of their state revenues.

A glutted oil market and shrinking demand from crisis-ridden Asian countries have hit oil producers worldwide.

The analyst said joint ventures would encourage a flow of much-needed foreign capital and help repatriate some of the billions of dollars invested abroad by wealthy Gulf Arabs.

"The trend is also for giant firms with sufficient capitalisation to participate in planned privatisation schemes," said the analyst who was close to GCC decision-making.

But economists in the region said the scheme, seen by the planners as a way out of the economic impasse, was not a magic wand that would revitalise Gulf economies.

"It is a matter of time... It is a matter of theory and its applications," a Gulf-based economist said.

He said the six states had yet to implement economic-integration plans drawn up when their alliance was formed in 1981.

Gulf Arab states have yet to form a

customs union or agree on a common GCC market and forge long-delayed free trade accords with other economic blocs.

Standard tariffs among GCC states range from four to 12 per cent, with higher tariffs levied by some states to protect their local industry.

A GCC common currency, one of the first topics discussed by GCC monetary authorities in the early 1980s, remains elusive.

GCC states agreed last year to allow Gulf banks to open branches in member countries, but bankers and analysts say the implementation hinges on feasibility and the ability of banks to compete against established financial institutions.

Despite the alarm over record low oil prices, a Western diplomat said the GCC was unlikely to take an initiative in Abu Dhabi, "but will call instead on other producers, OPEC members and non-members to respect their cuts."

OPEC has decided since March on production cuts amounting to 2.6 million barrels a day, but the decision has not been widely respected.

"The Gulf states don't want to decide unilaterally on (more) output cuts because they fear losing their share of

the market, which is shared with non-OPEC members that would continue to overproduce," the diplomat said.

Hours before the opening of last night's summit, Gulf newspapers on Monday urged the region's leaders to put the collapse in prices at the top of their list of priorities.

"Gulf leaders must face up to serious challenges, starting with the fall in crude prices," said Al Sharq, in Qatar. "The GCC summit can take decisions capable of redressing the balance because the Gulf economies are strong enough to carry out structural reforms," the paper said.

On the political front, Iraq urged its neighbours to take a "fair" stand and oppose any U.S. plans to overthrow President Saddam Hussein, warning that the turn of Gulf leaders would follow.

The ruling party's daily, Al Thawra, said, "those who think a change in government in Baghdad can lead to security are deluding themselves."

"If Iraq is the target today, certain other Gulf countries, if not all, could also become targets one day, especially as residents of the region know better than anyone what the Americans think of their regimes."

Government seeks to rein in deficit in 1999 budget

By Amy Henderson

AMMAN — The budget deficit for 1998 has already exceeded this autumn's deficit predictions by two percentage points, a senior official said yesterday.

The official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, told the Jordan Times that the deficit now stands at 9.3 per cent of GDP, more than two percentage points higher than estimations only a few weeks ago that 1998 would close with a seven per cent deficit.

His disclosure came ahead of a parliamentary review of the 1999 budget, expected to be passed to Parliament on Wednesday, according to a member of the Lower House Finance Committee.

The official said the 9.3 per cent deficit was a consequence of government spending channelled into the payment of outstanding debts to ministries and semi-autonomous institutions that were never before factored into previous budget esti-

mates. Additionally, said another official source, GDP "has not grown the way we expected it to."

"I could not say with large confidence that we are going to hit the 2.5 per cent growth that we had hoped for," the senior official said.

Since the government's disclosure earlier this summer that growth for 1996 and 1997 did not exceed 0.8 per cent and 2.5-3.0 per cent respectively (down from the projected five per cent and 2.5 per cent) economists have warned that Jordan should not expect to realise this growth rate.

The IMF, on which Jordan is relying to reschedule JD4.5 billion of foreign debt, had originally encouraged a five per cent deficit for 1998, a figure later revised after the revelation of the unexpectedly low growth in 1996 and 1997. The reform programme ends in February, but the country is seeking a two-year extension of the programme, although the government,

however, has been reluctant to further pare down public expenditure, fearing that such a move would push the economy into further recession.

The 1999 budget proposal approved by the Cabinet estimates a total expenditure of JD2.160 billion — including JD1.863 billion as current expenditure and JD477 million as capital expenditure — easily exceeding last year's spending figures.

However, the senior official

said that the estimates do not reflect a "real increase in expenditures for 1999."

"Keep in mind that the budget, for the first time this year, included all expenditures that were not previously accounted for in the budget," the official said. "This year, no single dinar was spent that was not included, and this is why the figure is higher than what we are used to seeing."

Total budget deficit for 1999 is estimated at seven per cent

of GDP, or JD388 million, which, says the official, should "definitely be acceptable" to the Bretton Woods Institute.

"We are under financial strain," he said. "Reducing the deficit from nine to seven per cent is a big achievement."

The senior official said that Jordan expects to receive an IMF mission after the Eid Al Fitr holiday in January, where, he said, "we hope to conclude an agreement."

Asian stocks rise slightly

Nikkei

TOKYO (DPA) — Tokyo share prices were slightly higher Monday amid a lack of fresh incentives, traders said.

The 225-issue Nikkei average closed at 14,723.49, up 83.52 points, or about 0.6 per cent.

Traders said the rise of some export-oriented blue chips helped the Nikkei index go up following Friday's surge on Wall Street.

At 3 p.m. (0600 GMT) the dollar stood at 118.91-94 yen up from 118.14-17 yen at the same time last Friday.

Jakarta

JAKARTA (DPA) — A technical rebound sparked share prices on the Jakarta Stock Exchange (JSX) which rose

9,065 points, or 2.3 per cent to close Monday at 399,460, dealers said.

The composite index at the JSX was closed on Friday at 390,395.

Brokers said despite the rise the market remained weak, with investors are concerned at the political uncertainty as student protests continued.

The rupiah was quoted at 7,550 against the dollar in late Monday afternoon trading.

Hang Seng

unchanged from Friday's close. HONG KONG (DPA) — Hong Kong's stock market rose 4.7 per cent Monday on lower interest rates locally and rallies on Wall Street and other overseas markets.

The Hang Seng index was up 465.68 points to 10,428.82,

after hitting a high of 10,433 and a low of 10,288.

Turnover was moderate at 6.2 billion Hong Kong dollars (\$803).

Local banks lowered interest rates by 25 basis points last Friday afternoon. Buyers were active throughout the day and short-sellers hurried to cover their positions.

Banks and property stocks led the market. Hongkong Bank closed up 5.4 per cent to 196.00 Hong Kong dollars while Cheung Kong was up six per cent to 56.50 Hong Kong dollars.

Dealers and analysts said market sentiment turned bullish after the unexpected low rate cut, while strong rallies on Wall Street and other major markets over the weekend also added steam.

Monday, 07-12-98 ACCESS 4648888

Exchange Rates

	JORDAN DINAAR	SAUDI RIYAL	UAE DIRHAM	BAHRAIN DINAAR	OMAN RIYAL	QATAR RIYAL	YEMEN RIYAL	IRAN RIAL	INDONESIA RUPIAH	THAILAND BATH	PHILIPPINE PESO	SINGAPORE DOLLAR	BRUNEI DOLLAR	MYANMAR KYAT	LAOS KIP	VIETNAM DONG	CHINA YUAN	HONG KONG DOLLAR	TAIWAN DOLLAR	NEW ZEALAND DOLLAR	AUSTRALIAN DOLLAR	EURO	US DOLLAR
JORDAN DINAAR	1.0000	0.1887	0.1927	0.1878	0.1930	0.1944	0.1943	0.1943	0.1943	0.1943	0.1943	0.1943	0.1943	0.1943	0.1943	0.1943	0.1943	0.1943	0.1943	0.1943	0.1943	0.1943	
SAUDI RIYAL	5.2987	1.0000	1.0213	0.9501	0.9442	1.0302	1.0302	1.0302	1.0302	1.0302	1.0302	1.0302	1.0302	1.0302	1.0302	1.0302	1.0302	1.0302	1.0302	1.0302	1.0302	1.0302	
UAE DIRHAM	5.1681	0.9791	1.0000	0.9742	0.9742	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	
BAHRAIN DINAAR	0.5325	0.1026	0.1026	1.0000	0.9793	1.0000	0.9793	0.9793	0.9793	0.9793	0.9793	0.9793	0.9793	0.9793	0.9793	0.9793	0.9793	0.9793	0.9793	0.9793	0.9793	0.9793	
OMAN RIYAL	5.1434	0.9707	0.9914	0.9554	0.9554	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	
QATAR RIYAL	0.4271	0.0826	0.0823	0.8021	0.8021	0.7855	0.7855	0.7855	0.7855	0.7855	0.7855	0.7855	0.7855	0.7855	0.7855	0.7855	0.7855	0.7855	0.7855	0.7855	0.7855	0.7855	
YEMEN RIYAL	4.8145	0.9296	0.9280	0.9409	0.9409	0.8538	0.8538	0.8538	0.8538	0.8538	0.8538	0.8538	0.8538	0.8538	0.8538	0.8538	0.8538	0.8538	0.8538	0.8538	0.8538	0.8538	
IRAN RIAL	21.4831	4.0544	4.1408	40.3416	39.5065	41.7669	41.7669	41.7669	41.7669	41.7669	41.7669	41.7669	41.7669	41.7669	41.7669	41.7669	41.7669	41.7669	41.7669	41.7669	41.7669	41.7669	
INDONESIA RUPIAH	1.4124	0.2868	0.2722	2.8523	2.8523	2.8523	2.8523	2.8523	2.8523	2.8523	2.8523	2.8523	2.8523	2.8523	2.8523	2.8523	2.8523	2.8523	2.8523	2.8523	2.8523	2.8523	
THAILAND BATH	0.8503	0.1605	0.1639	1.5958	1.5958	1.5958	1.5958	1.5958	1.5958	1.5958	1.5958	1.5958	1.5958	1.5958	1.5958	1.5958	1.5958	1.5958	1.5958	1.5958	1.5958	1.5958	
PHILIPPINE PESO	2.3486	0.2870	0.2863	3.3741	3.3741	3.3741	3.3741	3.3741	3.3741	3.3741	3.3741	3.3741	3.3741	3.3741	3.3741	3.3741	3.3741	3.3741	3.3741	3.3741	3.3741	3.3741	
SINGAPORE DOLLAR	1.3471	0.2663	0.2663	1.4129	1.4129	1.4129	1.4129	1.4129	1.4129	1.4129	1.4129	1.4129	1.4129	1.4129	1.4129	1.4129	1.4129	1.4129	1.4129	1.4129	1.4129	1.4129	
BRUNEI DOLLAR	1.6883	0.3186	0.3254	3.1703	3.1703	3.1703	3.1703	3.1703	3.1703	3.1703	3.1703	3.1703	3.1703	3.1703	3.1703	3.1703	3.1703	3.1703	3.1703	3.1703	3.1703	3.1703	
MYANMAR KYAT	2.6859	0.5237	0.5144	5.0118	4.9081	5.0118	5.0118	5.0118	5.0118	5.0118	5.0118	5.0118	5.0118	5.0118	5.0118	5.0118	5.0118	5.0118	5.0118	5.0118	5.0118	5.0118	
LAOS KIP	11.4512	2.1830	2.2051	21.5224	21.0799	22.2884	22.2884	22.2884	22.2884	22.2884	22.2884	22.2884	22.2884	22.2884	22.2884	22.2884	22.2884	22.2884	22.2884	22.2884	22.2884	22.2884	
VIETNAM DONG	23.4564	4.4258	4.5212	44.0472	43.1353	45.6005	45.6005	45.6005	45.6005	45.6005	45.6005	45.6005	45.6005	45.6005	45.6005	45.6005	45.6005	45.6005	45.6005	45.6005	45.6005	45.6005	
CHINA YUAN	48.8458	9.2182	9.4147	91.7321	89.8234	94.9605	94.9605	94.9605	94.9605	94.9605	94.9605	94.9605	94.9605	94.9605	94.9605	94.9605	94.9605	94.9605	94.9605	94.9605	94.9605	94.9605	
HONG KONG DOLLAR	2.2873	0.4217	0.4409	4.2952	4.2053	4.4447	4.4447	4.4447	4.4447	4.4447	4.4447	4.4447	4.4447	4.4447	4.4447	4.4447	4.4447	4.4447	4.4447	4.4447	4.4447	4.4447	
TAIWAN DOLLAR	19.8071	3.7584	3.7877	37.4792	36.7244	38.7444	38.7444	38.7444	38.7444	38.7444	38.7444	38.7444	38.7444	38.7444	38.7444	38.7444	38.7444	38.7444	38.7444	38.7444	38.7444	38.7444	
NEW ZEALAND DOLLAR	8.1146	1.5474	1.5638	15.6040	15.2536	16.1605	16.1605	16.1605	16.1605	16.1605	16.1605	16.1605	16.1605	16.1605	16.1605	16.1605	16.1605	16.1605	16.1605	16.1605	16.1605	16.1605	
AUSTRALIAN DOLLAR	16.8071	3.1848	3.2125	31.2972	30.6484	32.3484	32.3484	32.3484	32.3484	32.3484	32.3484	32.3484	32.3484	32.3484	32.3484	32.3484	32.3484	32.3484	32.3484	32.3484	32.3484	32.3484	
EURO	1.6883	0.3186	0.3254	3.1703	3.1703	3.1703	3.1703	3.1703	3.1703	3.1703	3.1703	3.1703	3.1703	3.1703	3.1703	3.1703	3.1703	3.1703	3.1703	3.1703	3.1703	3.1703	

MAJOR CURRENCIES AGAINST JORDAN DINAAR

NOTE: NEITHER ACCESS NOR THE PUBLISHER IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY ERRORS OR OMISSIONS

DEPOSIT INTEREST RATES

CBIA

CURRENCY

US DOLLAR

LIBOR

3 MONTH

6 MONTH

1 YEAR

2 YEAR

3 YEAR

4 YEAR

5 YEAR

10 YEAR

15 YEAR

20 YEAR

25 YEAR

30 YEAR

35 YEAR

40 YEAR

45 YEAR

50 YEAR

55 YEAR

60 YEAR

65 YEAR

70 YEAR

75 YEAR

80 YEAR

85 YEAR

90 YEAR

95 YEAR

100 YEAR

105 YEAR

110 YEAR

115 YEAR

120 YEAR

125 YEAR

130 YEAR



Fear of year 2000 bug may trigger early panic

The panic will start with people hoarding food and bank notes'

LONDON (R) — Even if the "millennium bomb" does not explode in the world's computers — just a year from now, 1999 is likely to see rising panic as people everywhere take precautions against computer failure triggered by the year 2000. Experts say the most vulnerable countries include Japan, France, Russia and Brazil, and the most vulnerable sectors are utilities and especially power generation.

"Next year we will see a period of calm broken by occasional news stories of computer system failures," said Dr. Anderson of Cambridge University's Computer Security Research Centre.

My own feeling is that around August or September panic will start, with hoarding food and bank notes. Then the whole thing becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. In the early days of computing, programmers did what was then termed space by abbreviating years to the last two digits. Programmers knew this could cause problems at the turn of the century, but computers would be unable to make sense of

"00" for the year 2000, and would crash or start spewing out flawed data. But they assumed that technology was moving so fast that these programmes would be history by then. They were wrong — and now the fear is that old data systems carrying the "millennium bomb" or "millennium bug" could trigger disasters around

the world in everything from defence, transport and telecommunications to energy and financial services. Early trigger dates may give bomb foretaste

As 1999 progresses, early trigger dates are likely to provide sneak previews of the chaos which may hit as clocks strike midnight on December 31, 1999. The first is January 1, 1999. Programmes used in some accounting systems operate a rolling year ahead as they set renewal dates for insurance premiums or bank loans — and may crash when they reach out beyond January 1, 2000.

According to Margaret Joachim, Year 2000 coordinator at data processing

services company Electronic Data Systems Corp. there are other dates next year which might trigger computer failure.

"April 9, 1999, the 99th day of the year, and September 9, 1999, which might be recorded as 9-9-99. This is because programmes often used nines as a cut-off for a programme. A row of nines

and tests completed by September 1999.

France, Russia cause for concern

Cambridge University's Anderson said that in western Europe, France was most at risk, with computer failures most likely in the public sector and especially public utilities.

Any problems could quickly become a problem for neighbours such as Britain, which receives electric power from France.

"There is still quite a question mark over whether France sees the scale of the problem," said Chris Webster, head of year 2000 services at Cap Gemini.

"There's a real chance that there may be some loss of service from utilities. Who, when, where or why? Impossible to say. Will it be a complete loss of power, voltage fluctuations? And there is a remarkable lack of information from utilities as to what they are expecting to happen."

According to JP Morgan's Year 2000 expert Patrick Ward, eastern Europe's and Russia's utilities are a big concern, not least because Russia provides 40 per cent of Germany's power.

Early system crashes might help planning for 2000 if some systems crashes are triggered early by the arrival of January 1, 1999, it might be a blessing in disguise.

"This will involve accounting, planning and budgeting systems rather than operational executing systems which carry out day-to-day business," Webster said.

"It will give you some experience in spotting the errors and knowing how to deal with them."

But Cambridge University's Anderson is taking no chances: "Personally, I plan to have three months' food, a working well, three tonnes of Calor Gas and 400 litres of diesel come the dreadful day."

(Yvonne Chang in Tokyo, Tan E Lyn in Hong Kong and Narayanan Madhavan in New Delhi contributed to this article.)

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Development at Aqaba's south beach gets underway

with construction of Israeli-British hotel

By Amy Henderson

AMMAN — construction on a new tourist village on the south coast of Aqaba will "start the ball rolling" on the much-delayed Aqaba South Coast Development plan, an Aqaba Region Authority (ARA) official told the Jordan Times yesterday.

The project will also be the first Israeli-owned project in the Kingdom. The venture will be owned by the Lewis Group International (LGI), a British Company, and its subsidiary International Hotels Services, based in Eilat, David Lewis, who heads LGI, holds dual citizenship in Britain and Israel. LGI owns 10 hotels around Spain and six in Eilat, Israel.

Head of the ARA Mohammad Smadi said that building on the village, part of the David Lewis Group of hotels, should begin by December 1999.

The project had been slated for completion this year. However, Smadi said that an increase in both the physical size of the project and the total investment was a "good omen" for Aqaba's future.

"We have been discussing this with [Lewis] for two and a half years," said Smadi. "Although things have been slow, it seems that they have a more positive outlook towards the potential of Aqaba than they had at any time in the past."

In 1996, LGI presented a project to build a 250-room hotel on the south beach, within the framework of the first phase of the Aqaba South Coast Tourism Development Plan launched at the Amman Economic Summit in 1995.

Development in the south beach area is a main tenet of the ARA's Aqaba tourism master plan and was originally scheduled to include the construction of

four hotels along the south beach. However, offers were neither as lucrative, nor as numerous as had been hoped for after the peace process began to ebb in 1996. Of 100 proposals forwarded, the ARA received only seven offers to develop the Aqaba area.

Smadi told the Jordan Times that originally, Lewis had agreed to lease 40 dunums along the south coast but in the current agreement has leased a total of 85 dunums. The group also has committed to build a five-star, 350 room hotel in the first phase of construction, with an option to boost the number of rooms to 500 during the second phase.

Total investment in the project is expected to be \$50-52 million.

Smadi also said the ARA was nearing closing a deal with Zara Investments, a holding firm with substantial concerns in tourism projects around the Kingdom.

including the Mövenpick Hotel at Aqaba, now close to completion.

According to Smadi, the Zara project will be similar to the Lewis project, but on a grander scale.

Zara has sought 160 dunums, according to Smadi, where another village will house a five-star hotel, two four-star hotels, and time-share apartments.

"We are almost finished with the details of this project," Smadi said. "We are looking at how best to use the land."

He said he could not yet disclose the amount planned for investment by Zara.

Negotiations for the construction of two multimillion dollar golf courses, also planned for the south coast, have been abandoned, but Smadi said that the ARA has been approached by several parties interested in developing the area.

China's interest-rate cut still cautious

SHANGHAI (APF) — A reduction of Chinese interest rates, the sixth since 1996, took effect Monday, but analysts said that it was expected to have little direct impact on flagging economic growth.

A Beijing-based financial expert said that the rate cuts, averaging about half a percentage point and announced by the central People's Bank of China (PBOC) Sunday, were not big by any means.

"Real interest rates will still be quite high because of the alleged negative inflation," she said.

Chinese retail prices began to fall in October 1997 as the effects of the Asian financial crisis and a long-term tight monetary policy came into play.

Government promises that prices would rise by the second half of this year following efforts to accelerate the economy with a huge infrastructure spending programme, have not been borne out.

A senior economist at East China Normal University, Chen Biaoru, told AFP that the size of the reduction was "appropriate" as the Chinese economy was far less sensitive to interest-rate changes than were Western economies.

Cuts of similar size in March and July had helped but "did not have the targeted stimulatory impact on consumption," he said.

As they produced no negative side-effects and succeeded in lightening the debt-servicing costs of the country's struggling state-owned enterprises, there was no reason not to go further, he said. China is trying to whip its

bloated state-sector into shape, but most of the firms have an enormous burden of debt accumulated from years of policy loans.

A loans official with the Development Bank of China, Wang Xuedong, said any stimulatory effect from the latest rate cut — which takes effect Monday — would have a lead-time of at least six months.

"The central bank is moving now to protect growth in 1999," he said.

The move "won't increase consumer spending much," he predicted, because Chinese in most parts of the country are still not sophisticated enough to shift savings from bank deposits into equities or other investments in response to interest-rate adjustments.

The financial experts said the same applied on the lending side.

"It's not the cost of borrowing that prevents people from borrowing," she said. "Certainly at a personal level, there's a culture of not borrowing from banks but borrowing from friends and family."

But she highlighted the reduction of interest rates on central bank loans to financial institutions from 5.61 per cent to 5.06 per cent, saying: "The motivation is clearly to get banks lending."

The Shanghai Stock Exchange failed to get any boost from the rate cut, with the composite index falling 9.65 points, or 0.8 per cent, to 1,209.54 points.

And the yuan remained virtually unchanged on the black market at around 9.1 to the U.S. dollars.

A.F.M. TRADE Monday, 07-12-98

ACCESS 4648868

Company Open Price Close Change

BANKS

ARAB BK	211.500	211.000	-0.24%
NTL BK	1.590	1.570	-1.26%
INDUSTRIAL DEV BK	1.430	1.420	-0.70%
THE HOUSING BK	2.770	2.770	0.00%
JQ KUWAIT BK	1.670	1.670	0.00%
JQ GULF BK	0.760	0.740	-2.63%
JQ ISRAEL BK	1.660	1.660	0.00%
JQ INVERARNA BK	1.450	1.450	+0.68%
PHILADELPHIA BK	0.800	0.800	0.00%

BANKS INDEX 276.750 point = -0.23%

INSURANCE

JERUSALEM INS	1.400	1.400	0.00%
JQ GULF INS	1.410	1.380	-2.13%
AL-NBR INS	3.480	3.420	-1.72%

INSURANCE INDEX 124.810 point = -0.85%

SERVICES

ELECTRIC POWER	1.470	1.470	0.00%
REED ELECTRICITY	1.800	1.810	+0.56%
VEHICLES OWNERS	2.140	2.250	+5.14%
SHIPPING LINES	1.020	1.020	0.00%
PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	0.800	0.800	0.00%
JQ INTL TRADING CENT	0.250	0.300	+3.25%
AL-RAY	8.330	8.320	-0.19%
AL-ZARQA FOR EDU	0.850	0.820	-3.53%
UNION LAND DEV	0.580	0.580	0.00%
UNIFIED LAND TRANS	1.110	1.110	0.00%

SERVICES INDEX 103.200 point = +0.01%

INDUSTRY

CEMENT	2.500	2.500	0.00%
PHOSPHATE	1.140	1.130	-0.88%
PETROLEUM REFINERY	10.220	10.210	-0.10%
WOOLLEN IND	1.040	1.030	-0.96%
THE FIDELITY & AGRI	1.020	1.020	0.00%
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL	2.560	2.520	-1.56%
CERAMIC IND	1.130	1.080	-4.42%
JQ STEEL	2.380	2.380	0.00%
JQ DARY	2.100	2.100	0.00%
TOBACCO & CIGARET	1.210	1.210	0.00%
JQ PAPER	1.070	1.080	+0.93%
RAFA	0.550	0.550	0.00%
DAR AL DAWA	4.900	4.900	0.00%
MIDDLE EAST COMPLEX	0.560	0.560	0.00%
JQ STEEL	0.890	0.890	0.00%
ARAB ALUMINIUM	1.880	1.860	-1.06%
CHLORINE	1.240	1.220	-1.61%
NTL IND	0.380	0.380	0.00%
PETRO - CHEMICAL	0.340	0.360	+5.88%
UNIVERSAL CHEMICAL	0.610	1.000	+64.93%
NTL CABLE	0.670	0.660	-1.49%
SULPHUR - CHEMICALS	0.400	0.370	-7.50%
ARAB CENTER FOR PHAR	1.170	1.170	0.00%
EL ZAY	1.110	1.120	+0.90%
UNIVERSAL MODERN IND	0.620	0.620	0.00%
IND. RESOURCES	0.470	0.440	-6.38%
NEW CAPLES	0.620	0.620	0.00%
NTL ALUMINIUM	0.720	0.710	-1.39%

INDUSTRY INDEX 72.910 point = -0.21%

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR DECEMBER, TUESDAY 8, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19) Sometimes you feel invisible, like you can do whatever you feel like and nobody will notice. That won't be the case today. Depending on what you do, you'll reap either applause or boos. Just remember to love in your heart, and most of your clothes on, and you'll probably get away with whatever you can think of.

Taurus (April 20 to May 20) You could get something you've wanted for your house without spending much money. A paycheck from a friend who owes you a favour. It could be a service you need. You'll come up with lots of examples of your situation, once you get started. Considering how serious you've been this year, maybe you could get your house painted!

MINI (May 21 to June 21) Conditions are bringing you responsibility, authority and confidence. You're learning how to do something you've always admired. Try this out on a willing audience. Be confident, but respectful. Ask like your partner has some valuable advice to give you. Don't be so foolish as to think you already know it all.

CANCER (June 22 to July 21) This is an excellent day to do on another job or upgrade the one you have. You've been spending lots of positive attention, and you could also be spending quite a lot of money. Make sure any agreement you make today is one you can be proud of. If you've got the experience, you can ask for top dollar.

LEO (July 22 to August 21) You're profound, energetic, optimistic — everything you've always wished you could be, and more. You're getting a glimpse of your future the way you could make it happen. Get a really clear picture of the person you want to be five years from now. That's the blueprint you're going to work from.

VIRGO (August 22 to September 22) Virgo is one of the signs in the zodiac at taking care of other people. That's why you stress about it sometimes. You want to be absolutely perfect with every person on your list, and it's just overwhelming. Don't forget to take one other person into consideration: yourself. The rest will fall into place automatically.

LIBRA (September 23 to October 22) You and your group are inspiring everyone around you. They all want to join your group. Well, why not? The more the merrier. It doesn't make any difference how many people are on the team, as long as you're getting the job done, and it looks like you've got a really interesting job to handle. If you don't already, then you should.

SCORPIO (October 23 to November 21) A powerful person in your life could make you wealthier. This person has certain needs, many of which you can fill without much effort. Once you get the routine figured out, you could supply whatever is required before it's even requested. That makes you indispensable. If you're not there yet, make it your top priority.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22 to December 21) You're lucky in love today. Knowing that, will you call somebody you admire and ask for a date? That could be a person you've loved with for years, by the way. An interesting thing about love is that it's always changing. It's new if you say it is. It's new if you refresh it. Choose what you've got, and revel in it.

CAPRICORN (December 22 to January 20) Insider information could lead to a fabulous deal. Looks like the best opportunity has to do with a domestic item, or possibly something you'd be buying for a close family member. If that's the case, start with a phone call. Begin the conversation by offering a gift of your own, a compliment, for example.

AQUARIUS (January 21 to February 19) If you toss the ball or the idea or even the prospect of a sale to somebody else in your group, that person can close the deal faster than you can. Looks like there will be several people involved in making this day a success. Each provides something needed. It's a potluck dinner, except in this case it's ideas and skills.

PISCES (February 20 to March 20) Another good day for promotions and increases in responsibility. If you see a job you could do that isn't already being done, offer a suggestion. Don't be shy. The other person may have been waiting for you to say something. Instead of being part of the problem, be part of the solution. That's enough to put you into the leadership category.

Birth Stone of December: Turquoise — Zircon

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Broncos squeeze past Chiefs for 13-0 record

DENVER (R) — The Denver Broncos were far from perfect but fought off a stubborn challenge to beat the Kansas City Chiefs 35-31 and take their undefeated season to 13-0 on Sunday.

Denver rallied for two touchdowns in the final seven minutes to become only the third team in NFL history to open a season with 13 straight victories.

The Broncos extended their winning streak to 18 games, including last year's playoffs. They also clinched homefield advantage throughout the AFC playoffs. But they did not lead until John Elway hit tight end Shannon with a 24-yard touchdown pass with 3:34 remaining.

"This team didn't quit," Elway said. "Sharpe got open and all I had to do was throw the ball."

It was the only reception of the game for Sharpe, who became the first tight end in NFL history with seven straight 50-catch seasons.

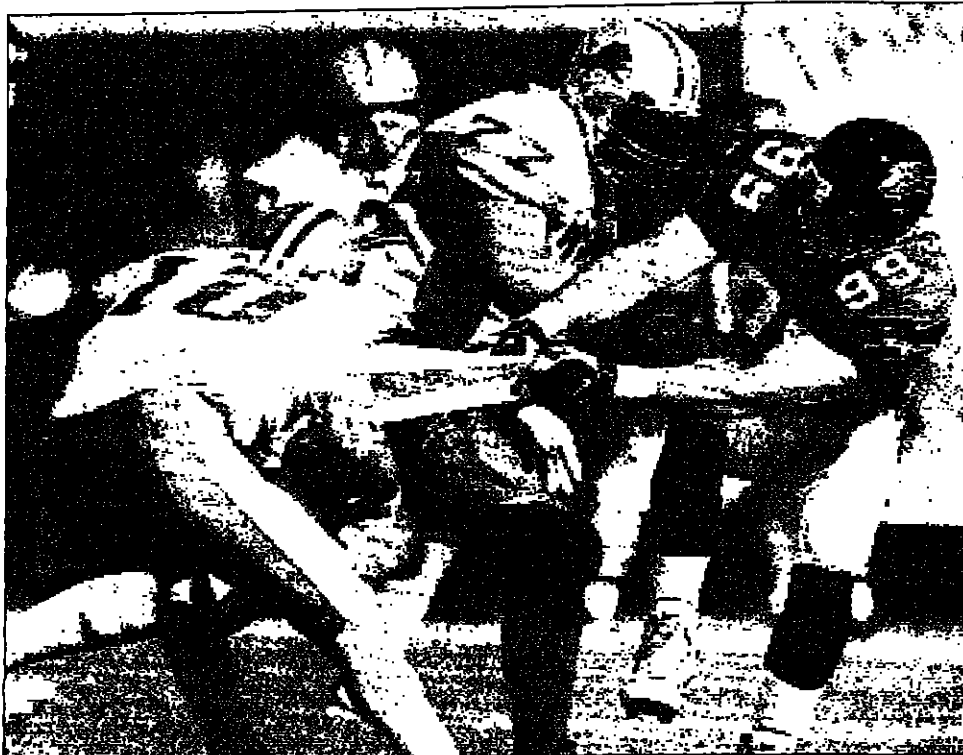
In Minneapolis, Randy Moss set a single-season rookie record for touchdown catches as the Minnesota Vikings jumped out to a 27-point halftime lead and clinched the NFC Central Division title with a 48-22 rout of the Chicago Bears.

Moss caught three more touchdown passes from Randall Cunningham and finished with eight receptions for 106 yards.

The star wideout set the NFL mark for first-year players with 14 TD catches, one better than John Jefferson of the 1979 San Diego Chargers and Billy Howton of the 1952 Green Bay Packers.

In Charlotte, North Carolina, Steve Beuerlein fumbled the snap on the third play of overtime, setting up Wade Richey's 23-yard field goal moments later that lifted the San Francisco 49ers to a 31-28 victory over the Carolina Panthers and into the playoffs.

After rallying from a 28-7 third-quarter deficit to tie the game, the Panthers (2-11) had a chance to win, but John Kasay's 47-yard field goal attempt with 22 seconds left in regulation sailed wide right.



Jacksonville Jaguars Joe Smeenge pulls down Detroit Lions quarterback Charlie Batch (10) for a sack while being blocked by Lions Mike Compton (77) in the first quarter (Reuters photo)

In Atlanta, the Falcons fell behind by 14 points but kept quarterback Chris Chandler healthy and gave the ball to running back Jamal Anderson in the fourth quarter before winning their sixth straight game, 28-21 over the Indianapolis Colts.

Chandler completed 20-of-28 passes for a season-high 297 yards and two touchdowns. Atlanta stayed one game ahead of second-place San Francisco in the NFC West.

In Cincinnati, Eric Moulds caught six passes for 196 yards and two touchdowns as the Buffalo Bills cruised to a 33-20 victory over the lowly Cincinnati Bengals, who are 2-11.

In Jacksonville, Florida, Mark Brunell sprained his ankle on the second play of the game but the Jacksonville Jaguars did not miss a beat behind backup Jamie Martin and running back Fred Taylor in a 37-22 victory over the Detroit Lions.

In New Orleans, the Saints' Kerry Collins fired two touchdown passes, including an 89-yarder to Andre Hastings. Doug Brien booted a pair of 53-yard field goals and the

defence dominated throughout in a 22-dribbling of the Dallas Cowboys.

In East Rutherford, New Jersey, New York Jets' quarterback Vinny Testaverde, after throwing for 418 yards, ran five yards with 20 seconds left in the game to score a controversial touchdown to give the Jets a 32-31 victory over the Seattle Seahawks.

Television replays clearly showed Testaverde's knee going down at the 1 before he extended the ball to the plane of the goal line.

In Pittsburgh, the New England Patriots kept pace in the tight AFC East race with a 23-9 victory over the Steelers, winning at Pittsburgh for the first time since 1986.

New England quarterback Drew Bledsoe played with a broken finger and engineered winning drives in each of the last two games. Wearing a protective wrap on his right index finger, Bledsoe completed 21-of-33 passes for 327 yards, a touchdown and three interceptions.

In Rajlon, Maryland, Trent Green threw a 20-yard touchdown pass to Leslie Shepherd with 1:54 remaining to lift the Washington

Redskins to a 24-20 victory over the San Diego Chargers.

In Tempe, Arizona, Cardinals' quarterback Jake Plummer threw two interceptions and fumbled once in a 23-19 loss to the New York Giants, who scored 13 points after the three turnovers and erased a 10-point deficit.

Arizona (6-7) dropped into a tie for the third wild card position with New Orleans.

New York climbed back into playoff contention with a dominant ground game that outgained Arizona, 200-73. Gary Brown carried 25 times for 124 yards for the Giants.

In Oakland, the Miami Dolphins' linebackers Zach Thomas and Robert Jones returned interceptions for touchdowns as the Dolphins defeated the fading Raiders, 27-17, to keep pace with the Jets.

In Nashville, Tennessee, Al Del Greco kicked three field goals, including a 33-yarder with 3:34 to play that accounted for the winning points, as the Tennessee Oilers broke a two-game losing streak with a 16-14 victory over the Baltimore Ravens.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

SV Hamburg apologise to St. Pauli over fans

HAMBURG (DPA) — SV Hamburg Monday formally apologised to city rivals St. Pauli for violent attacks of some of their fans on St. Pauli players at St. Pauli's central stadium Saturday. "The incidents make us very angry. We regret the incidents and offer our apologies to St. Pauli," said SV Hamburg manager Holger Hieronymus, who vowed that those involved would be banned for life from entering Hamburg's stadium again. It was revealed only earlier on Monday that St. Pauli players were attacked by a group of 300 with bottles, beer cans and eggs when they arrived late Saturday in Stuttgart for a second division game to be played Sunday. Striker Marcus Marin was kicked and almost had a glass bottle knocked on his head, but team doctor Peter Benchenhoff managed to snatch the bottle at the last moment. Coach Gerhard Kleppinger and goalkeeper Klaus Thomforde were hit by full beer cans before the team fled back into their train.

S. Africa to face Egypt without captain

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) — South African national team captain Lucas Radebe will miss the Nelson Mandela Inauguration Challenge against Egypt at the FNB Stadium on December 16. Radebe captains English Premiership club Leeds United who have asked South Africa to release him for league games against Coventry on December 14 and Arsenal on December 20. Midfielder John 'Shoes' Moshoeu and striker Shaun Bartlett have also been ruled out. Turkish club Fenerbahce need Moshoeu and Bartlett, who plays for Swiss side FC Zurich, is injured. African Nations Cup holders Egypt have named a 25-man squad, including the team that defeated South Africa 2-0 in the final last February in Burkina Faso. South Africa drew 1-1 with Argentina in the inaugural Mandela Inauguration Challenge three years ago, lost 3-2 to Brazil in 1996 and 2-0 to Holland last year.



The Swedish Davis Cup tennis team celebrate their victory as they spray each other with champagne after winning the 1998 Davis Cup against Italy in Milan, 4-1, leading one of the world's top tennis nations to a seventh Davis Cup trophy (AFP photo)

Sweden eyes more Davis glory after rout of Italy

MILAN (DPA) — Sweden looks set for a stand at the top of tennis in the wake of a seventh Davis Cup title, achieved 4-1 at the weekend over morale-sapped Italy. The Scandinavians overpowered the hosts 4-1, with Diego Nargiso saving local face with a straight-set reverse singles victory against Magnus Norman Sunday afternoon.

But the victory sealed a day earlier as Sweden raced to an unstoppable 3-0 lead in the tie on Italian-chosen indoor clay.

The win was the second Davis crown for Swedish captain Calle Haggeskog, who led Sweden to the trophy 12 months ago against the United States.

"It's not nice, it's just different," said the architect of recent wins. "Every final is different. Every final is different. We never get satisfied with winning, we want more."

"We have eight players who competed for Sweden this year," said Haggeskog. "That depth, and a unique junior system, is the secret to our success."

Sweden beat Italy minus its top pair of players, Thomas Johansson, No. 17, and No. 22 Thomas Enqvist, both injured.

"We're looking forward to repeating this win again and making it three straight," said former world number 4 Jonas Bjorkman, now 24th after a slide through the rankings.

"If we can do that, it would be a great effort. But we have proven that right now Sweden in No. 1," Bjorkman joins Stefan Edberg and Mats Wilander as the only Swedes to have won three Davis Cup crowns. "I'm there with Stefan and Mats but I can't compare myself to them in terms of what I've achieved

in my career as a whole. I still have a lot more to do."

Italian hopes died Friday when No. 1 Andrea Gaudenzi was felled by a shoulder injury and had to quit in his fifth set against Norman. That setback spelled the end for home any upset plans.

Italian coach Paolo Bertolucci may now find his job — which was given in the heat of a crisis just over a year ago — on the line. His contract expires next week and Italian media is already speculating about his chances.

"I'm very disappointed," he said. "This defeat bothers me. I don't want to think about the future. We knew that Sweden were favourites. The boys did all they could. I would have preferred to have had a full team."

Gaudenzi went for a third operation on his right shoulder Monday in Austria. His next season could already be compromised as he may be out for up to six months.

"I'd rather be going to Australia but I'll be in rehabilitation," said the 25-year-old. "I want to play without pain. I want to play the second part of my career at 100 per cent."

The team says it will be by Bertolucci.

"He must be considered for next year or we're there," said Nargiso Sanguinetti. "I feel the same. If there is Bertolucci, there won't be us."

Gaudenzi, who joined the Davis Cup singles and doubles past few years, has little respect for the national federation.

"I don't expect any form of thanks from the federation, because you can't expect anything from those people," he said. "I didn't see anyone from the federation there clapping their hands during my match."

"Every 15 minutes they got up to go get something to eat."

Sweden's 31-year-old Magnus Gustafsson was thrilled to have been in the Cup. "For me, this is a bonus. I will never win a Grand Slam, so this is the best for me. When I finish my career, I will know that I've created something."

"To do it with my team, friends is even a better feeling."

Sema Group wins computer contract for Olympics

LONDON (AFP) — The French-British computer company Sema Group has won a multi-million pound contract to manage computer systems for the Olympic games between 2000 and 2008, it said on Monday.

Sema, which takes over the Olympics' information technology management from U.S. giant IBM, said that the contract was the biggest of its type on record.

The company will coordinate and supervise IT suppliers and develop and run some of the main organisational

computer systems, starting in the 2002 Salt Lake city Winter Games and through the 2004 Athens Olympics to the 2008 games.

Responsibilities will include accreditation of participants in the games, staff data bases, accommodation and transport and athletes' qualification information, as well as diffusion of information onto the Internet and to the news media.

The contract does not include the 2000 Sydney Olympics, where Sema is signed as a sub-contractor. Sema

Group said it had "played a key role" in the 1992 Barcelona Olympics, as well as in the 1994 football World Cup, the EURO96 football tournament, and the 1998 Commonwealth Games in Kuala Lumpur.

Chief executive, Pierre Bonelli, said that the new contract was "a unique opportunity to demonstrate our skills and experience in the management of long-term complex projects on time and budget at the world's most highly regarded sports event."



Wasin Taiwo (L) of MVV Maastricht cries out after he missed a chance, watched by Ajax Amsterdam midfielder Frank de Boer (R), during their Dutch league match. At center is Ajax goalkeeper Erik van der Sar. The match ended 1-1 draw (AFP photo)

Chinese gymnast Sang Lan, right, talks with Chinese acrobat Wang Lixin, left, and members of the Chinese acrobatic troupe, after the Big Apple Circus performance in New York. The 17-year-old Chinese gymnast, who broke her neck during a practice vault at last summer's Goodwill Games, visited the circus as her first outing during her continued rehabilitation (AP Photo)



TODAY AT	CINEMA TEL:463-4144	CINEMA TEL:463-4144	CINEMA TEL:5699238	CINEMA TEL:5677430	CINEMA TEL:5934793	CINEMA TEL:5934793	Bisham Yanes Theatre TEL:4625155
	PHILADELPHIA '1'	PHILADELPHIA '2'	PLAZA	CONCORD	GALLERIA 1	GALLERIA 2	
	Richard Gere .. in RED CORNER	Jeff Bridges .. in WHITE SQUALL	Comedian Mohammad Huneidi .. in SAEEDI AT THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY	CONCORD "1" Patrick Swayze & BLACK DOG Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30 CONCORD "2" FRENCH KISS Shows: 3:30, 5:30	ABDOUN www.cns.com.jo/Galleria Antonio Banderas .. in THE MASK OF ZORRO Shows: 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	ABDOUN www.cns.com.jo/Galleria Comedian Mohammad Huneidi .. in SAEEDI AT THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY Shows: 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30	Watch out for the new play
	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30				

Listings for films and showing times as received by cinemas and their advertising agencies.



LOCAL
SPORTS
SCENE

Jordan loses futsal match to Libya

AMMAN — Jordan Monday lost to Libya 5-4 in the first Arab Futsal Championship currently under-way in Cairo Egypt. Jordan had won the opening match 15-6 over Syria. The competition also includes Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Sudan, Morocco, and Mauritania.

Faisali's delegation honoured in Bethlehem

AMMAN — Al Faisali's delegation, currently on a visit to the Palestinian territories were honoured by Bethlehem Mayor Rashed Ja'bari. Al Faisali, the season's Jordan Cup winner, drew 2-2 in their first match against Hebron. They were due to play Hail of Jericho Monday.

Arab Badminton Federation thanks Jordan

AMMAN — The Arab Badminton Federation sent a message of appreciation to Minister of Culture and Youth Tala'at Al Hassan and Jordan Olympic Committee Secretary General Ismat Kurdi for their efforts to introduce badminton to the 9th Pan-Arab Games, which will be held in Amman Aug. 15-31, 1999. The federation concluded its meeting in Cairo Monday with participants from Morocco, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Bahrain and Egypt taking part. Missing the event were Iraq and Palestine. The federation called on all members for taking necessary steps to ensure all team's participation. The federation agreed to hold a training course for coaches in Amman, a youth badminton championship in Egypt and the Arab Clubs Championship.

Compiled by Ahmad Khatib



United Arab Emirates' Ali Mahmood lies on the court after being pushed by a Kuwaiti player as team officials try to break up a scuffle between the players during their Asian Games handball match in Bangkok. Kuwait won the emotionally-charged match in the last few moments 21-20 (Reuters photo)

China makes nervous start

BANGKOK (AFP) — China struggled to establish their superiority on the first day of the Asian Games competition Monday with their swimmers slowing down and their shooters off target.

That led Japan through to lead the medals table while the Thai hosts of the 13th Asian Games were delighted to win two gold medals and best in international prize of the 41 nation event which has drawn more than 6,700 athletes.

Japan led the medal table with seven golds, against six for China and five for South Korea.

In the swimming, Japan's Yusuke Tajima easily beat world record holder Chen Yan in the women's 400m medley.

Tajima, bronze medal winner at Beijing's world championships, took the race in 4min 39.92sec. China's Wu Yanyan was second but Chen was more than seven seconds behind in third.

China won three of the swimming finals, through Shan Ying who secured a second straight Asiad title in the women's 100m freestyle (56.20sec), Zeng Qiliang in the men's 100m breaststroke (1:02.32) and the 4x200m freestyle relay team of Qin Cui, Qian Min, Yang Luna and Chen Chen Hua.

But Japan added a second gold through Yusuke Kishikawa who won the men's 200m freestyle in 1:52.46, just beating Thai favourite Todorop Sotthothron.

China also got the men's team gymnastics title and weightlifting golds through Liu Xubua in the women's 48kg class, who set a new world record of 83.5kg, and Lan Shizhang in the men's 56kg division.

Japan shot to the top of the medal table however by taking all three judo titles and a cycling gold from Sachiko Kamakura in the women's downhill mountain bike race.

Japan were given a brilliant start to the Asian Games when Naoko Takahashi won the marathon that launched the Games on Sunday. Thailand had started the day in morose mood after snooker star James Wattana

crashed out of the Games on Sunday night — as the spectacular opening ceremony went ahead.

But spirits were lifted when mountain biker Pannarong Kongsamut and the women's air rifle team won their events.

The shooting team, led by a smiling Thanyarat Papiromchaikul who also won a silver in the individual contest, beat the Asian Games record of 1,172 points held by China.

International Olympic Committee President Juan Antonio Samaranch said the opening ceremony was one of the best he had seen in his life. He congratulated the National Olympic Committee of Thailand and the organisers.

Samaranch also welcomed Beijing's bid for the 2008 Olympic Games but China will not be completely happy with their day.

On top of the indifferent form in the swimming pool, the Chinese shooters were also off-target.

China's former Olympic champion Wang Yifu, managed only second place in the men's free pistol, behind Kazakhstan's Vladimir Guchsha.

Wang blamed illness, as he did when he lost the Atlanta Olympics gold, but national team coach Shao Jianhua was not happy. "My shooters did not perform very well

today," he fumed. "They were too slow entering peak form."

China's track and field stars were chided by the head of the Chinese Athletics Association, Lou Dapeng, for failing to produce good performances on the international stage.

Athletics coaches were furious after their country's failure in the women's marathon, won by Takahashi. China's Pan Jihong was fourth.

In a rare display of public anger, Lou said: "The Japanese can always achieve good results in international competitions, but the Chinese athletes can only run well at home."

"What's the use of running a good time at domestic competitions?" he added praising Japan's "scientific" training techniques.

South Korea won all four medals in the taekwondo but not without some argument. Lee Hee-Young took the middleweight gold after it was stripped from Chinese opponent He Luming by the jury.

Judges rejected China's counter-protests amid stormy court-side scenes.

North Korea celebrated their return to the Games — after boycotting Hiroshima four years ago — by taking the men's free pistol team event.

Taekwondo secures first silver medal for Jordan

Prince Hassan cables delegation, urges further efforts

By Aileen Bannayan
in Amman and Jordan
Sports media reporters
in Bangkok

JORDAN MONDAY became the first Arab country on the medals table of the 13th Asian Games in Bangkok when Hussein Tahleh won the silver medal in taekwondo on the first day of competition.

Competing in the 78-84 kilogramme category, Tahleh won three matches before succumbing 3-2 to the World and Asian titleholder from Korea who went on to win the gold.

On his way to the final, Tahleh beat an Indonesian player 2-1, Qatar's Abdul Qader Adhami 2-1 and a Thai player 2-0.

HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, Monday sent a cable to the Jordanian delegation in Bangkok, relaying His Majesty King Hussein's congratulations to Tahleh and the Kingdom's 56-member delegation who have joined 40 other nations at the century's final sporting event.

Minister of Culture and Youth Tala'at Sa'at Al Hassan also congratulated the team and the Jordan Taekwondo Federation.

Also Monday, International Olympic Committee President Juan Antonio Samaranch praised Prince Hassan's efforts in serving the Olympic movement and sports in general, stressing that the Prince's bid to include squash as an Olympic sport was being seriously considered on the Asian and Olympic levels.

Meanwhile, Monday, Jordan's Mohammed Falah lost his taekwondo bout in a controversial call which was disputed by many officials.

Teammate Zaha Talhouni won her first bout 3-1 over a Thai player but later lost to a Korean who eventually won the title.

In Judo, Rami Dasouqi faced tough competition and lost playing against

the Korean world champion and another Mongolian player.

In weightlifting's 56-kilogramme category, Aayed Khawaldeh, who was the first Jordanian to win three bronze medals in one event at the Pan-Arab Games in Beirut, came in fifth among fifteen participants.

Delegation official Mohammad Darwish said he would contact the minister of culture and youth to set cash award for Jordan's medal winners.

In the Kingdom's past two participations in the Seoul '86 and Hiroshima '94 Asian Games Jordan's sole medals were achieved through taekwondo with three silver and five bronze medals.

The taekwondo team, fresh out of a ten-day training camp in Taiwan, is favoured to secure more medals again. The team is headed by Ibrahim Aqil, who won the gold medal at the recently concluded World Military Games in Houston, Texas.

The rest of his teammates were also medal winners at the last Pan-Arab Games in Beirut. Those include gold medalist Tahleh, silver medalist Mohammad Abul Ruz, Zaha Talhouni, Nancy Hindi, and bronze medalist Ahlam Bino.

Alisar Matar, Luma Abu Judum and Ali Asmar compete in taekwondo today. In Squash, Jordan's Sa'ed Hijazi starts competition while in judo Tawfiq Hussein competes in the 73-kilogramme category.

In the squash draw, Jordan's top player Mohammad Saeed will face Kuwait's Adel Sbeiti Wednesday. If he wins he will have a tough match against one of Pakistan's top players, Zarak Khan.

The draw for the boxing event also took place Monday with 180 athletes from 31 nations entered in the event.

Jordan's delegation pins high hopes on Mohammad Abu Khadijeh, who won three gold medals at the



Hussein Tahleh

8th Pan-Arab Games, the West Asian Games in Tehran and Jordan's only gold at the 18th Arab Boxing Championships which concluded in Tunisia recently.

Abu Khadijeh plays against a Palestinian in the first round on Saturday. He is assured of a bronze medal and will be trying for silver or gold.

The boxing team also includes Pan-Arab Games boxing gold medal winner Ayman Nadi, and bronze medalist Basel Hindawi. According to their coach Maytham Amer, both champions' draws assured them of bronze medals.

On the sidelines of the event, Jordan Olympic Committee (JOC) Vice-Chairman Mouaffaq Al Fawwaz will head the country's delegation at the meetings of the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA).

Jordanian officials will update the OCA Arab state

members on preparations for the Pan-Arab Games and urge fellow ministers to support the West Asian Games.

They will also meet officials from the organising committee of the Sydney Olympic Games as well as Japanese Olympic officials charged with sports marketing who would be beneficial in that aspect of the Pan-Arab Games.

The OCA will also today look into Jordan's recent complaint of disqualification from the World Cup handball finals where Saudi Arabia took first place while Jordan came second on points with Kuwait and Bahrain.

The organising committee gave Kuwait the runner-up spot after disqualifying Bahrain on a technicality.

The Kingdom has 19 officials and 37 athletes in the last sporting event of the century where only

Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan are missing the event. Jordan is competing in 11 sports: athletics, boxing, bowling, gymnastics, judo, karate, shooting, squash, swimming, weightlifting and taekwondo.

The IOC has underlined the importance of taking part in the Asian Games saying it was "an invaluable chance to assess our teams and pinpoint our location on the map of Asian sports being part of plans of the Ministry of Culture and Youth to prepare teams for the upcoming Pan-Arab Games in Amman next summer and the 2000 Sydney Olympics."

Jordan is represented by the best athletes in their respective sports. The athletics team includes Fakhreddin Fuad — a gold medalist in the Pan-Arab Games high jump.

The team just concluded a training camp in Qatar where Fuad achieved 215 centimetres, and just came short of his record of 222.

Teammate Mohammad Abdul Baqi set a new Jordanian record in the triple jump with 15.53 — 18 centimetres more than his previous mark.

The delegation includes judo's silver medalist Musa Khalaf, swimming's bronze medalist Hana Majaj, karate bronze medalist Butheina Mahsiri.

Jordan is not taking part in team sports — notably soccer, handball and basketball.

The national teams of these sports were negatively affected after their federations had their share of controversial issues to deal with. The basketball board declined participation after the freezing of all basketball activities following the federation's resignation which was retracted at a later stage.

The handball federation declined after Jordan achieved 9th place among 11 teams at the Arab Cup in Cairo.

Korea push aside Japanese in Asiad grudge match

BANGKOK (AFP) — A controversial brace of goals from striker Choi Yong-Soo took South Korea to a crucial 2-0 win over arch-rivals Japan in their Asian Games grudge match here on Monday.

The win means the Koreans are in pole position for one of the two places in the quarterfinals. Japan were left needing to win both of their remaining matches — against the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait — to have a hope to progressing.

Choi scored once in each half in the second round.

group two encounter to give the Koreans the vital three points.

His first came from the penalty spot after Japanese goalkeeper Yuta Minami was harshly adjudged to have pulled down midfielder Yoon Jong-hwan. Minami was booked for the offence and Choi hammered the ball home to the keeper's right.

The penalty was one of few goal-scoring opportunities for the Koreans as the Japanese dominated the midfield but were unable to show the guile and quality necessary to break through in

a first-half littered with yellow cards.

Referee Rusamee Jindamee booked six players — three on each side — in the opening 45 minutes of a match that was far from physical.

Japan, who fielded a team made up entirely of players under 21, came close to scoring when Shinji Ono's free-kick from the edge of the

area was spectacularly saved by Kim Byung-ji in first-half injury time.

But the Koreans wrapped the game up within two minutes of the restart as Choi struck again.

The 25-year-old hammered the ball home off Minami's near post, the ball ricocheting off the upright before clipping the other post and going in.

Japan's defence complained about the decision, however, as Korean's Lee Dong-gook was standing offside when the ball was played over the defence.

The protests were waved away and with them went Japan's hopes as the Koreans shut up shop and Japan continued to falter in front of goal.

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Russia seeks early lifting of Iraq sanctions — Primakov

MOSCOW (R) — Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov told visiting Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz Monday that Russia backed an early lifting of sanctions against Baghdad provided it complied with U.N. Security Council resolutions.

Russian news agencies quoted Primakov's spokeswoman Tatyana Aristarkhova as saying the premier, a Middle East expert who speaks Arabic, had commended Baghdad on its recent decision to resume cooperation with U.N. arms inspectors.

"Yevgeny Primakov called for constructive actions in the direction of lifting sanctions by all sides involved in resolving the Iraqi situation," Interfax news agency quoted Aristarkhova as saying.

The two men also discussed bilateral relations, including the participation of Russian companies in the provision of humanitarian aid to Iraq, she added.

Aziz's visit comes on the

heels of a trip to Moscow by Richard Butler, head of the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) monitoring the scrapping of Iraq's weapons programs.

Earlier Monday, Aziz met Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov who urged the United Nations Security Council to quickly review Baghdad's compliance with resolutions calling for its disarmament and to lift sanctions as soon as possible.

"There should be without delay a review of [Iraq's] compliance on all the disarmament documents," Ivanov told a news conference after about two hours of talks with Aziz.

"This review could bring us to the lifting of the oil embargo," Ivanov said, referring to the U.N. trade sanctions imposed after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990.

The U.N. Security Council is preparing to review Iraq's compliance with its resolutions calling for Baghdad's

disarmament and Baghdad hopes the review will presage a removal or easing of the sanctions.

Russia, China and France have made clear they want the review to acknowledge efforts Baghdad's effort in this area.

But the United States and Britain, the other two veto-holding permanent Security Council members, have said they still see the lifting of sanctions as being some way off.

They remain deeply mistrustful of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, who narrowly averted U.S. and British air strikes last month by pledging unconditional cooperation with the inspectors overseeing the scrapping of Iraq's biological and chemical arms.

Even so, both Baghdad and Moscow said they were optimistic that an end to sanctions could soon be in sight.

Aziz said Baghdad had been cooperating with the U.N. resolutions and the

U.N. refusal to recognise and reward this by easing sanctions was "unacceptable."

"After an objective review is made, and carried out in the spirit of the law, Iraq expects steps to be taken fulfilling the action of lifting sanctions," Aziz said.

Ivanov added: "We are approaching the end of a long process which has lasted eight years and brought great suffering on the Iraqi people."

Russia has good relations with Iraq and has acted as a mediator in the past. Helping negotiate a breakthrough over Iraq would be a welcome boost for Russia's efforts to present itself as a major force in global diplomacy.

It would also enhance Russia's chances of winning potentially valuable trade contracts with Iraq when sanctions are eventually lifted and would increase Baghdad's ability to pay back billions of dollars in debts owed to Moscow.

Iran's Khatami warns of spread of 'religious fascism'

TEHRAN (DPA) — Iran's moderate president, Mohammad Khatami, warned Monday of the spread of what he called "religious fascism" in Iran.

"We should beware of justifying fascism on the basis of religion," Khatami said in a question-and-answer session with students at Sharif University in Tehran on the occasion of Students' Day.

Khatami was referring to what he termed as "ideological turmoil" in Iranian politics. He charged that several factions were going into extremes "regarding isms" (political tendencies).

"Some even reject liberalism although liberalism and other Western schools of thought do have their pros and cons," Khatami said.

He cited the ultra-Islamist group Taleban in Afghanistan as example and termed their demand that men wear a certain size of beard as banal. "Problems cannot be solved by wearing or not wearing a beard," he said, causing laughter and applause among the few thousand students in the packed sports auditorium. Wearing a beard is also an important criterion for men working in government offices in Islamic Iran.

"We cannot live with the civilisation of nine centuries ago but have to create a new civilisation compatible with

the needs of today's people," Khatami added, to more applause, referring to demands by conservatives that officials stick to strict Islamic norms in running the country.

"We should learn to build dialogues on tolerance rather than responding to other opinions by just telling people to shut up," Khatami said.

The students at the gathering shouted slogans in support of Khatami, including "Khatami, we will support you," and for the first time they also shouted, "Death to the anti-president front."

There were also for the first time slogans in support of the late former liberal Iranian Prime Minister Mossadeq, who was an opponent of the Iranian monarchy in the early 1950s.

Regarding radical pressure groups, namely the Ansar Hizbollah (Companions of the Party of God), which is the main group opposing Khatami's reform course, the president warned that this group should not think that their sacrifices for the revolution "allow them to act outside the framework of law" and "intimidate the people."

Khatami, who took office in August last year, once again called for the creation of a civil society, adding that if existing laws were insufficient "then they should be amended."

Ocalan questioned by French judge

ROME (AFP) — Abdullah Ocalan, the Kurdish rebel leader under house arrest near Rome, was questioned on Monday by a French judge investigating four Kurds held in France on extortion charges, legal sources said.

French anti-Terrorist Judge Jean-Francois Ricard examined Ocalan, who was arrested in Rome on Nov. 12, about Kurdish criminal activities in France.

These activities include alleged attempts to murder opponents of Ocalan's Kurdish Labour Party (PKK), smuggle illegal immigrants with false papers and extort money from Kurds living in France.

French investigators have charged four Turks of Kurdish origin of forcing their compatriots in France to help fund the PKK to the tune of \$3.5 million a year.

Ocalan's arrest provoked diplomatic wrangling between Italy and Turkey after Rome refused to extradite the Kurdish leader to Ankara, where he faces terrorist charges linked to the PKK's 14-year struggle for Kurd independence.

Italian law forbids extradition to a country where suspects could face the death penalty.

Ocalan has said he is willing to face an independent international court to answer the charges.

He also indicated on Sunday he was willing to testify about the 1981 assassination attempt against Pope John Paul II and the 1986 slaying of Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme.

In Brussels meanwhile, European Union (EU) foreign ministers called Monday for Ocalan to be tried by an international court.

A spokesman for the EU's Austrian presidency said the ministers agreed a statement expressing support for the idea of the PKK leader being judged by "a European or an international tribunal."

The statement also expressed EU support for the fight against terrorist acts carried out by the PKK or other terrorist networks and for the way Italy has handled the Ocalan case since he was detained in Rome last month, the spokesman said.

Shalala relays Clinton's support for Lahoud

BEIRUT (AFP) — U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Donna Shalala praised the new government of Lebanese President Emile Lahoud on Monday and said her visit to Lebanon was a sign of the nation's progress on a range of important issues.

"The government has made progress, especially concerning safety issues. All this is positive," Shalala said after meeting with Lahoud.

The lifting of the ban (on U.S. travel), the number of visits by cabinet officers to Lebanon and my extensive visit outside Beirut are all positive messages by the government and people of the United States to Lebanon," she said.

Shalala said she relayed U.S. President Bill Clinton's "strong support" for Lahoud and told him "how impressed we are with his cabinet appointments."

Shalala, who was asked to make the trip by the president, is the first U.S. cabinet official in decades to make a several-day stay in Lebanon, although Commerce Secretary William Daley and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright have also made official one-day visits.

Washington lifted a ban on U.S. nationals travelling to Lebanon in 1997, although it continues to warn that the country remains "dangerous."

The measures were imposed in 1985 after a spate of kidnappings of Americans and deadly anti-Western attacks by Lebanon-based groups during the country's 1975-1990 civil war.

Shalala, who is of Lebanese descent, arrived here Friday and has toured U.S.-funded projects as well as holding an

impromptu picnic in the eastern city of Baalbek, a stronghold of the Shiite Hizbollah organisation.

Hizbollah spearheads the guerrilla war to force Israel out of south Lebanon, where the Jewish state maintains a buffer zone to curb cross-border attacks on its northern territory.

Shalala acknowledged continuing demands for an end to Israel's 20-year occupation of southern Lebanon, asserting that "the U.S. is always committed to a comprehensive peace process in the Middle East."

She added that she had discussed with Lahoud "some of his plans in the country, including administrative reform. I found in [Lahoud] high intelligence and thoughtfulness about the great complexities he now has to face."

"We are enthusiastic because there is promise in the future in this country. Lebanon has always had both economic and strategic importance to the United States," she said.

Shalala also met Monday with prime minister-designate Salim Hoss and Parliamentary speaker Nabih Berri on Monday.

Hoss announced a new slimmed-down cabinet on Friday, largely made up of new faces and including many technocrats, but without the traditional representation of party members of former warlords.

He also vowed to deal a blow to widespread corruption and reduce the yawning budget deficit and public debt incurred by the previous government of Rafik Hariri, who launched the multibillion dollar post-war rebuilding process.

Jordan seeks ways to protect its interests in final deal

(Continued from page 1)

Most notably over the past five years, the country has repeatedly reassured the Palestinians that it has no political ambitions in the West Bank and in final status negotiations, and has no interest in politically weakening them.

According to officials, however, only the Speaker of the Palestine National Council Ahmad Qouriea, and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat's deputy Mahmoud Abbas, both of whom carry significant political clout, are interested in bringing Jordan close into the talks. Others in the PNA still harbour suspicions.

As such, apart from the usual rhetoric, attempts at bilateral coordination are close to nil, said officials — greatly weakening both sides' negotiating tactics with Israel.

However, May 4, 1999 is

looming over the horizon. Arafat has repeatedly said he will declare an independent state in May, when the Palestinian-Israeli Oslo interim peace accords expire. And this is occupying the minds of many officials here.

If Arafat proceeds with his stated intent, it would mean that final status issues will indefinitely be put on hold.

What further worries some in Jordan is that in order for Israel to avert such an option, the Palestinians and Israelis might draw up a "declaration of principles" before the May deadline, laying out the two parties' guiding principles on the final issues. In such a situation, the Kingdom's interests would most likely not be reflected, said the senior official.

For now, Jordan, Egypt and the U.S. are trying to convince the Palestinian leadership that a declaration of statehood might work against the PNA's interest, and that of the region, he said.

According to another official, the Palestinians and Israelis have reached an agreement on an economic permanent status (EPS) in second-track diplomacy, comprising single tariff areas and a single customs union. The EPS only marginally includes Jordan and Egypt, the official said.



ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CLASHES: An injured Palestinian youth is carried off by a Palestinian police officer, left, and other Palestinians on Monday, during a clash with Israeli soldiers on the outskirts of Ramallah. Palestinians clashed with Israeli troops throughout the West Bank to demand the release of political prisoners held in Israeli jails less than a week before a planned visit by U.S. President Bill Clinton (AP photo)

Palestinian police show U.S. officials confiscated weapons

GAZA CITY (AFP) — Palestinian police on Monday showed a U.S. delegation more than 200 guns seized as part of a confiscation programme launched in accordance with anti-terrorism measures called for by the Wye River agreement.

Palestinian police chief Ghazi Jabali said the weapons — including Kalashnikovs, Uzis, machineguns and pistols — had been confiscated in line with a government decree

last month threatening a six-month jail sentence and \$800 fine for anyone holding weapons without a permit.

The decree also lays down prison sentences and fines for making, smuggling or selling weapons.

Palestinians had until Sunday to hand in their weapons voluntarily, with the option of applying for a permit.

Permits are only given

for pistols. Other arms and explosives are forbidden.

We are enforcing the decree strictly," Jabali said.

The Palestinian National Authority undertook to carry out the weapons confiscation programme as one of its commitments under the Wye accord to try to halt attacks on Israelis.

The U.S. delegation included officials from the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency as well as the U.S. consul general in Jerusalem, John Herbst.

Algerian government denies role in massacres, slams report

ALGIERS (AFP) — Algeria's government on Monday rejected allegations that security forces colluded with those responsible for massacres, slamming its accuser as a "mouth-piece of terrorism."

Reacting to a report by the New York-based Human Rights Watch, Algerian foreign affairs spokesman Abdul Aziz Sbaa said the organisation's report of "troubling signs of possible collusion" between security forces and Islamists "did not merit

dwelling on."

Abdul Aziz Sbaa described the claims as "falacious theses" and Human Rights Watch as a "mouth-piece of terrorism."

In a report published in New York last week, the organisation said "suspicious have been reinforced" by meetings outside Algeria and by "others on the ground" with survivors of massacres and former members of the security forces.

Algeria has repeatedly criticised

Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, which have both called for enquiries into who is killing whom in the country's clashes.

Islamists have been fighting the secular regime and attacking civilians since the 1992 cancellation of general elections which the now-outlawed Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) was poised to win.

Estimates of the number of civilian dead range from 30,000 to 100,000.

Egyptian woman attempts suicide over jeans ban

CAIRO (AFP) — A young Egyptian woman tried to kill herself on Sunday because her mother forbade her to wear jeans, a newspaper reported Monday. The government daily Al-Akhar said the 24-year-old had bought the jeans although her mother told her not to, since they were "incompatible with family tradition's" because they were too revealing of her figure.

Feminist appeals court to allow screening film

NEW DELHI (AFP) — An acclaimed feminist film director Monday appealed India's supreme court to ensure that screenings of her latest work, a lesbian love story, are no longer disrupted by radical Hindus. Hindu fundamentalists have attacked theatres showing the film in New Delhi, Bombay and other cities. Based on the love of two sisters-in-law, both unhappily married, it stars top actress Shabana Azmi.

Two policewomen jailed for smoking heroin

SHANGHAI (AFP) — Two policewomen from Southwest China's Chongqing city have been jailed for extorting money from drug offenders and using the heroin they confiscated, the official Laodong Daily reported Monday. A court sentenced the two officers to 4.5 and 3.5 years, on Nov. 9, it said.

Stowaway pussy survives Atlantic flight

LONDON (R) — Katie the cat vanished in London and reappeared 3,000 miles away in Montreal after stowing away in the suitcase of her owner. The four-year-old black and white cat crawled into John Pearson's bag and wrapped herself warmly in his jacket and sweater before surviving the seven-hour flight to Canada in a pressurised cargo hold. The dishevelled cat reappeared when Pearson unpacked his suitcase. Katie returned to England safely but now has to serve six months in anti-rabies quarantine.

Too much sex endangers rare bird

WELLINGTON (R) — Too much sex may lead a rare New Zealand bird, the Hibi, to extinction, a university researcher warned Monday.

There was a possible link between the Hibi's aggressive mating behaviour and exposure to a common fungal disease, Isabel Castro, from Massey University's Institute of Natural Resources, was quoted as saying in the university's alumni magazine.

Cindy Crawford suffers eye injury in auto accident

MALIBU (AFP) — Supermodel Cindy Crawford was slightly injured in a Sunday night car accident that sent shards of glass into her eyes, said the Los Angeles County sheriff's office. The accident occurred in Malibu, on a road along the Pacific Ocean.

Malibu Turkey to smooth ties

BRUSSELS (R) — NATO's Italy and Turkey agreed on Tuesday to smooth their troubled relations pending a decision by a Malibu court on the fate of a Turkish leader.

The Italian Foreign Minister Lamberto Dini, after meeting his Turkish counterpart Ismail Demirel in Brussels, said: "We have been together with Mr. Dini for a better understanding of the position Italy has taken and to therefore reach back to the climate of cooperation between our two countries — to the Malibu cave."

Israeli soldier explodes, sets gu

TEL AVIV (AFP) — An Israeli soldier exploded and killed himself and a Palestinian woman in a suicide bombing in the West Bank on Monday. The soldier, 24, was part of a unit that was on patrol in the town of Ramallah. He was carrying a large amount of explosives. The explosion killed the woman, 24, and injured several others. The soldier was identified as a member of the Israeli Defense Forces.